

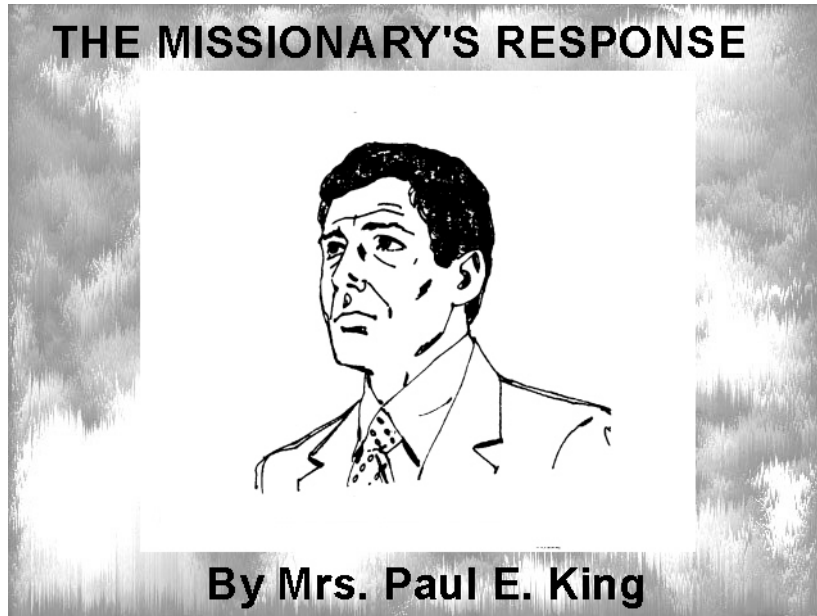
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**THE MISSIONARY'S RESPONSE**  
**By Mrs. Paul E. King**

"And so another village goes without a church building," Dennis Fingerling stated sadly while bright tears glistened in his deeply-set, tired-looking blue-gray eyes.

"Oh, what must God think of us who have so very much and give so miserly. So selfishly! Right now, there are six preaching points to which my

wife and I go and hold services out under the open heavens. We have no money to erect a church building; nor are there preachers to help us out in the ministry. Where are the laborers?"

He asked the question pointedly, never so much as taking his eyes off those sitting in the pews, looking perfectly satisfied, unmoved and complacent. Tears ran like streams from his eyes and down his cheeks, which were sun-bronzed but anything but full and fleshy.

For a long time he stood there, statue-like, behind the pulpit, looking through tear-blurred eyes across the congregation. What happened to these people; many of them the same people who, less than fifteen years ago, had caught the vision and sent him out to be their missionary-representative for the Lord? "We cannot go," some had told him brokenly, "but we will support you: you must go for us; those of us who cannot go. We will support you with our prayers, our finances and our love."

Dennis tried to remember, or recall, just when it was that both he and Charlene had begun to feel a lessening of their physical strength and the stronger than ever opposition to their encroachments into the devil's territory. Six years ago, maybe? no, it was more like six and a half. Or, perhaps, even, seven. He only knew that somewhere, sometime, someone had stopped praying and interceding for them and the work they were sent out to do in the sin-darkened, sin-blighted remote areas of the jungles.

When were the prayer ropes slackened? he wondered. And by how many? And why? Why? The need had never diminished. Never! If anything, it had increased. Considerably so. The work was expanding; God's truth was marching on, going into areas never before touched and reached by the gospel. Souls were being converted; changed. Sanctified wholly. Oh, where were the laborers? The harvesters? The intercessors?

Like one coming suddenly out of shock, Dennis made one last plea.

"Who is here, sitting under the sound of my voice, who will say, 'Lord, here am I; send me?' Is there one. . . ?"

Silence reigned. A few of the middle aged shuffled their feet impatiently, wondering when (and wishing that soon) the service would be over. Some yawned loudly, declaring openly their utter boredom. From

somewhere near the back of the church a snicker echoed to the front and up to the ears of the brokenhearted, greatly-burdened and deeply-grieved missionary.

From his torso up, he prostrated his thin, undernourished form over the pulpit, sobbing brokenly and unashamedly. Raising his head upward and his hands outward, he asked brokenly, pleadingly, "Do we no longer have sons and daughters to give to God for His kingdom work? Are there none? Not even one? And is there no one who is willing to sacrifice that the lost may hear the good news that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners? No one not even one -- who will pay for the building of a church? Where could you better invest three or four thousand dollars? Such a small investment for such great returns!"

He looked wan. His body trembled; his frame shook with the rending, tearing sobs. No one moved forward; not one. Exhausted and incredulous, he motioned for the pastor to take over. Brokenhearted, he fell on his knees by one of the pulpit chairs and sobbed uncontrollably while the congregation filed noisily and merrily out the door.

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The Julliards went home in a drowsy mood. "Oh dear," Hannah Julliard remarked to her husband, "I'm so glad that's over. I had such a difficult time staying awake. In fact, I caught myself dozing several times. I'm glad the dinner will be ready for serving as soon as we're home. I'm going to lie down after I wash and dry the dishes. Anybody with common sense knows you and I are too old to go to a mission field. And we certainly can't be giving away what we have saved for all these years. You're not a young man anymore, Floyd," she said as she reached over and patted her husband's hand.

"I felt right sorry for the missionary, Hannah. I did," Floyd Julliard remarked. "Of course we can't go, you and I. And like you said, I saved too long and worked too hard for what is saved to be giving it to something neither one of us is ever going to get to see. Still, I did feel right sorry for that man. He looked a mite too sallow and too thin to allow me to feel . . . well . . . to feel exactly comfortable. After all, you and I have plenty to eat, and more. We don't need to worry about mosquitoes nor poisonous snakes nor. . . ."

"Hold it, Floyd; hold it! He's a missionary: He's used to mosquitoes and poisonous snakes. He perhaps thinks no more about them than we think about the robins hopping on our lawn, come spring. A missionary can't expect to have everything rosy and beautiful.

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"Now don't you tinker around with either one of your big motorcycles," Hannah said as they pulled into the wide driveway of their spacious home. "Dinner's all ready; in the oven, Floyd. It will only take me a few minutes to dish it up and toss the salad. . . ." And Hannah got out of the car, as soon as the motor stopped inside the garage, and hurried to the kitchen door which connected with the sunny garage.

"Well, I'm ready to go to the lake. How about it, kids? Are you ready? Bring your swimming gear?" Thor Brownston asked as the last of his four youngsters got into the car.

"We're ready!" all four chorused loudly.

"But what about dinner, Dad? I'm hungry," Thor Jr. declared.

"Your mother didn't miss a thing, son," Thor Sr. said. "Everything's inside the trunk, in the cooler. Right, hon?"

Mrs. Brownston smiled. "Your father's right," she replied. "We'll have a sumptuous meal at the lake fried chicken, roast beef -- the works. We'll heat the beef and gravy up on the little propane camping stove. There's potato salad, baked beans, pickled eggs, corn relish.

"Stop it, Mom; I can't stand it: I'm starved. I thought that man was never going to stop preaching," Thor Jr. declared.

"Don't say 'man,' Thor," his mother corrected: "He was a missionary. And I did think he was rather good. A bit over-emotional, perhaps; but good. And quite interesting."

"But I wonder what he would do if he had the long working hours I have," Thor Sr. added emphatically to the conversation. "There's no way I can find the time to pray; not in the way he thinks we should. I'm up and on

the job early, and most evenings I work overtime. So when would I get time to intercede? After all, he and his wife don't have to punch a clock each morning: There's no one there telling them when or what time to begin their day's work. I sometimes think those missionaries expect too much out of those of us who aren't a missionary."

"Oh, Thor, don't let it get you upset; after all, it's been years since they were back to the States. They've sort of lost touch with reality, that's all. They don't realize how the cost of living has escalated nor what this dreadful inflation has done to us."

"I think it would have been really neat if our church could have built one of the churches," ten-year-old Jillian said quiet-like from the back seat. "I'd have emptied my piggy bank to help."

"Silly!" B. J. exclaimed with sarcasm. "What good would your few quarters and dimes and nickels do?"

"Jesus multiplied the five loaves and two fishes, B. J.: He could have multiplied my quarters and nickels and dimes," Jillian replied softly.

"Don't worry about those buildings, Pumpkin," Thor Sr. told his daughter, with a hint of agitation in his voice. "Someone will see that they get built. But I can't help: there are too many things we need ourselves."

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"How do you like it, hon?" Eddie asked his tiny wife. "Isn't it a beauty? All my life I've wanted a boat like this. It's beautiful. Beautiful!"

"But Ed," CarriAn said quickly, "Isn't it . . . well, I mean . . . well. . . . The price, Eddie; it's. . . ."

"Too high? That's what you were going to say, I know. But, no, it isn't too high priced. Especially when you consider the fact that we'll be eating and sleeping on the Sea-Hawk. No more motel room expenses, and we'll eat out only when and if we want a change of pace and scenery. The way we're gone for most weekends, the Sea Hawk will soon have paid for itself. And, my dear, we'll be on the water almost constantly. Almost, I can hear and feel

the gentle lap, lap, lapping of the water against the sides of our beautiful boat."

"Don't you . . . well . . . feel a bit . . . selfish, Ed? After all, that missionary on Sunday really seemed sincere. I was hoping we could give enough to build a church."

"You . . . you what? Are you crazy, CarriAn? No way! I've saved too long to get something really nice for us to cruise around in -- in the water -- and I'm not about to give it to anybody. Not even a missionary. He'll manage some way. And what's more, those natives don't mind worshipping outside, I'm sure. They're not used to a church."

"But that's because they're too poor to build churches, Eddie. You heard what he said. I think we should send at least a couple thousand over so he could build."

"Are you kidding, No way, CarriAn. No way! I think it's about time now that I get something for us to enjoy. Come, the Sea Hawk's ours. Paid in full. We must get stocked up for our first trip. Four weeks, hon; think of it! Four weeks by ourselves -- on the water. We'll go to the gulf and. . . ."

"Oh God!" the widow cried in agony of soul. "God, please, please, strengthen our missionary and his wife. They look tired; so very tired. And hungry, too. And . . . and Lord, he seems frustrated. Where are the laborers? Please, kind Father, send forth laborers into these whitened harvest fields. I'm too old to go: send someone, Lord. Please! And drive the forces of hell back, Oh God, and give many souls to Dennis and Charlene. Fifteen years ago I promised I'd pray for them, regularly, consistently and earnestly. Now Father dear, Thou seest I have kept this vow. Only, please, increase my burden; enlarge my vision.

"So many don't care; they're burdenless and drowning in things; materialism has a strangle hold upon them. Shake us, Lord, and awaken us. The crystal pieces, Lord? Oh yes, yes, gladly, Lord. They're Thine. I forgot about those pretty dishes. Thank Thee, kind Heavenly Father, for reminding me."

As fast as her arthritic joints would allow, the widow hurried to the phone and dialed the antique dealer, a friend of hers.

"Sybil," she said, with a voice that fairly trembled with excitement, "you remember all the cut glass and crystal. . . ."

"Why, yes. Yes, I do. And it's still fifteen hundred I'll give you for all of them. No, let's make that eighteen hundred. Everything's going up in price. You're my friend, I'll give you the last named figure."

"They're yours, Sybil; every one of those beautiful pieces. Come anytime and get them. The sooner the better. I need the money for a building project over in the jungles. . . ."

"Dennis, huh?"

"Yes."

"Then we'll make a check out for twenty-five hundred. I want to get in on that building project too."

"Three to four thousand dollars builds a church over there, Sybil. . . ."

"Is that so? Well, then you and I will build a church, my dear. You can't let me out of anymore of your kingdom work."

Placing the receiver back on the phone, the widow wept for joy. What a privilege it was to give. And what joy and blessing too, she thought, as she looked around in her sparsely furnished rooms to see if there was anything more she could sell.