

Sample Missions Interview

(This sample Intro to Missions interview is produced single-spaced to cut down on the file size. The interviews handed in as class assignments should be double-spaced)

I interviewed retired Nazarene missionaries Larry and Eunice Bryant. Through the years Larry and Eunice, who both graduated from Olivet Nazarene University and from Nazarene Theological Seminary, were missionaries to several different countries and locations. Their first missionary assignment took them to Guatemala between 1950 and 1962. Then they went on to be missionaries in the countries of El Salvador (1964-77) and Peru (1977-79). They also were involved in a cross cultural experience as well in Texas where Eunice served as a teacher at a Spanish-language seminary which trained pastors for Mexico and for Spanish-speaking churches in the U.S. and Puerto Rico.

Some of the Bryant's missionary tasks included being teachers, church leaders, and industrial directors. Eunice was the teacher. She helped by teaching the missionary children as well as by teaching at various Bible Schools and Seminaries. One of Larry's tasks was serving as district superintendent while in El Salvador. He also helped out in training the people in various job skills. Some of the things that he taught were mechanics and farming. In farming he taught them new methods to help increase their production. In particular he helped the farmers in Guatemala to increase their potato production. This helped to make the potatoes more affordable for the people while also increasing the farmers' income.

One of Bryants' main strategies for reaching the people was to develop future leaders. Eunice said that their mission was "not to stay there for ever, but was to develop future leaders so that the people could take over." She felt that the need to develop leaders is one of the most important things for missionaries to realize. Another strategy that they followed was to teach the people to become bible translators themselves. According to Eunice, Bible translation is one of the most effective ways to reach the people. As an example, she told of a particular church among a group of people that had 150 members in it. After the Bible was translated into the language used by that church, the congregation -- within a relatively short period of time -- grew to 2,000 members. According to Eunice, the Bible translation played a major role in this church's rapid growth.

There were also some things the Bryants tried which didn't work so well. They said that most of the things that didn't work were things that they tried to introduce from their own culture. Both seemed to feel like this could be a problem when ministering cross culturally. One instance when Larry tried to teach the Indians to plant corn. The Indians had always planted corn in circles, but Larry felt that this was probably decreasing their production, so he told them that they needed to plant their corn in straight rows. The Indians told him that the corn would not grow that way, but finally Larry convinced one Indian to try it. At first this Indian's corn grew well and looked nice and straight, but when the first major wind storm came along, all of the Indians corn was laid flat and destroyed. On the other hand, the other Indians who had planted the corn in their traditional way found their corn still standing in there nice tightly formed circles. Eunice said, "This showed us that the way we thought things ought to be done was not always the best way."

Eunice described two major struggles that they faced in reaching the people. One of the problems was those who came from other denominations. She said that there were some who came to the Nazarene Church from other denominations who brought their other tradition's theologies with them. This she said caused problems. Another problem was that the people often held to a form of legalism. She said that they found education to be the key to overcoming these two problems.

Eunice said that if she could go back she would love to be a Bible Translator. She just

felt like that this had one of the biggest impacts upon the people. She said she would encourage those going into missions to consider this type of missions work, and to learn as many different languages as they could.

In preparing to go into missions work Eunice said that she found that God often used things that we might not really consider at the time to be preparation. For example, although she wound up with a D.Min. from seminary, she majored in math in college. She said having this degree in math helped her greatly on the mission field by opening doors for her to be a teacher and consequently in getting to know the people. She also encourage any one considering missions work to get involved as early as possible in cross-cultural experience, whether that be to another country or inside the states. Last of all she said that to be effective missionaries, we must not have any prejudices or think of ourselves as better than others. She felt that it is important for one to draw close to God, and to grow in love for other people.