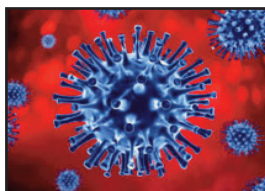


Chapter 45

THE DAYS OF COVID-19



During our research and information gathering for this book, the world as we knew it changed! The words "Made in China" took on a whole new meaning as the COVID-19 outbreak became known. It was a worldwide event by early 2020, which caused severe social and economic disruption of epic proportions. Some say COVID-19 was responsible for the most significant global recession since the Great Depression. Our OAC staff worldwide felt the effects immediately, as going out into the open air and gathering with others was neither encouraged nor, indeed, legal in many places. For an organization that thrives on being where the people are, what did we do during this period of history when we were not out on the front lines?

First, we used this extra time to mend our nets! Mending nets is a necessary activity in the fishing industry. It is important to schedule time away from fishing to repair torn or damaged nets, as they can become ineffective over time. Spiritually speaking, our OAC workers are fishers of men, and the "nets" we use include Bibles, paintbrushes, sketchboards, and object lessons. But such "nets" also have a spiritual, mental, and emotional dimension which must be maintained in order to be effective in the open air. Although not scheduled or expected, the days of being restricted from public proclamation during COVID-19 offered us time to step away from the usual routine and fortify ourselves mentally, spiritually, and physically. We look back now and see that God used this time to prepare us to become more effective for the day we would return to the task of fishing for men. It was a time of turning our thoughts towards God, thanking Him for what He had done in the past, asking Him to strengthen, renew, and use us uniquely in the present, and looking forward to what would take place in the future.

The second thing we did during the days of COVID-19 was let our creative juices flow and follow the Spirit's leading. Many of our staff worldwide experienced this. As a result, online Bible clubs, evangelism forums, outreach videos, and other web-based ministry venues were established and used regularly. God used the days of isolation and social distancing mandates as a time dedicated to reaching people we may never have encountered had our "normal routine" not been disrupted. And broken it was! For the first time in our history, we were unable to meet in person for our international staff conference. This event was scheduled for 2020 to be held in Jamaica. However, our staff were creative, which led to our latest OACI President, David Proaño, being elected and installed virtually! Many of our staff regularly met via Zoom and had terrific times of sharing the Word, encouraging one another, and spending time in prayer.

The days of COVID-19 derailed several and utterly destroyed some secular and Christian organizations. We are thankful that God not only preserved us but did great things even in the midst of such a chaotic time. Our staff experienced His powerful care and provision. Due to this refining process, we are a stronger mission, and our truceless warfare of "Presenting Christ By All Means Everywhere" continues as we advance into new fields in His name.

