

PERSPECTIVE

NOVEMBER 2021

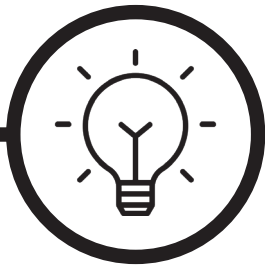
serving other churches

—EMMANUEL BAPTIST—
NAIROBI

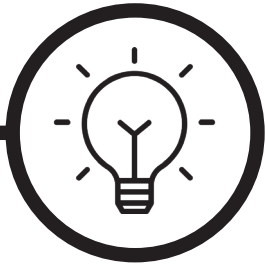
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November

Serving Other Churches: Emmanuel Baptist, Nairobi

In 2021, we are paying special attention to the topic of serving other churches. We want to partner with other congregations by knowing, encouraging, strengthening, and sharing for the sake of the nations. Very often, churches are focused on how big they can be. It's certainly good to grow! We want to see Mount Vernon grow numerically and spiritually. However, biblical growth includes deepening our relationships with other churches. Our commitment to serving other churches is a reflection of our desire to see the gospel spread widely and deeply across the whole earth.

One of Mount Vernon's dear friends and partners in ministry is Ken Mbugua, the lead pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Nairobi. Ken diligently shepherds his own congregation as he preaches, disciples, evangelizes, and raises up leaders who plant churches in Africa. Ken and Emmanuel Baptist leverage their influence through *Ekklesia Afrika*, a ministry devoted to providing pastors with sound, biblical resources.

Emmanuel Baptist is committed to serving other churches. In this interview, we learn more about Pastor Ken and his gospel work in Nairobi.

MVBC: How did the Lord save you and lead you into pastoral ministry?

KM: I came to know of the Lord through the efforts of an independent, fundamentalist, Baptist missionary. For a long time, I was falsely assured of my salvation because of a watered-down Bible teaching that deemphasized perseverance of the saints and congregational life where no one ever confronted me in my sin.

However, by God's grace, I eventually came across teaching on Christ where he was rightly described as a King. It dawned on me that my lifestyle proved that even though I knew the gospel intellectually, I had no saving relationship with Jesus. At this point, I truly believed in the same gospel that was taught (but not lived out) in my unhealthy church. The Lord brought me to salvation.

Shortly after that, while teaching VBS at the church, I felt a strong internal call to the pastoral ministry. Meanwhile, multiple pastors in the church affirmed that I should pursue ministry.

MVBC: Would you share a little about your family?

KM: I have a tough and beautiful bride named Arlette.

She's from Cape Verde, an island off the West Coast of Africa. She was born in Senegal but raised in New England from the age of five. We have been blessed with three kids, Eden (5), Zion (2), and Judah (newborn).

MVBC: Please describe your church, Emmanuel Baptist. How long have you been there, and has the church changed over the years?

KM: I came to EBC in 2010. When I came, it was a predominantly expat church—a church with many international residents of Nairobi. Before I arrived, the Lord used the faithful work of the lead pastor, Joel Weaver, to bring more health to the congregation.

I became the senior pastor in 2015. We soon amended the constitution and moved to adopt a system of church government with a multiplicity of elders. This was by far the most significant change of my early years in ministry. We also amended the Statement of Faith which required adherence to dispensational theology, and adopted the Baptist, New Hampshire Confession of Faith with some amendments. We revised the process of welcoming new members to involve the congregation as a whole. Shortly thereafter, we went through our first ex-communication of a church member (the church was planted in 2002).

In recent years, we have sent out several church planters. The Lord has been very gracious. The foundation laid under Joel Weaver's leadership has served us well, and we have experienced growth in different ways this past decade.

MVBC: You seem to be raising up many pastors for ministry; what is your plan for training these men? Where do they tend to go when they have finished your program?

KM: We began running an internship program the first year I started as senior pastor. God has used it for much good over the years. As time has passed, it's become clear that options for substantial theological education are lacking in this part of the world. Whereas in the United States, brothers have opportunities to pursue good schooling in a variety of institutions, here the situation is not the same. The men we send out typically are well-trained in church ministry but still lacking in other theological disciplines.

For this reason, we've put a temporary pause on the internship to allow us to focus on setting up a two to three year residency. It will include an online MA degree, classes on-site, and the regular observation of day-to-day ministry, which was typical for interns. We hope this will

allow those we train on staff to leave better equipped for pastoral ministry.

MVBC: How do you keep Emmanuel focused on the Great Commission? What does that look like for you?

KM: First and foremost, preaching the Bible! We are preaching through Acts (I took a break from Romans after preaching the first eight chapters). Preaching through books of the Bible is how I can help us keep our eye on the ball and not get distracted. Second, the different roles we have created on staff allow us to have a healthy pipeline of brothers that we hope to keep sending out to Kenya and beyond. Lastly, it seems like the Lord is moving among men and women in the church to give them a heart for the unreached and unengaged. We have a handful of good-quality saints in the church that we are hoping to send to Radius International for training in missions in the next 12–18 months.

MVBC: You started a ministry called *Ekklesia*. What is your vision for this work?

KM: Though many talk about the numbers of Christians exploding in Africa, we are worried by the kind of Christianity we are seeing around us—not all of the growth is solid, and little is deep. Due to the harvest, we cannot plant churches fast enough, so we are attempting to strengthen and revitalize existing churches. We accomplish this important work through the distribution of theological resources and the training of pastors. God has really blessed these efforts. At the end of this year, we expect to have more than 500 church leaders in three countries enrolled in our training program. Please pray for fruit.

MVBC: What are some of the biggest challenges you are facing now as a pastor?

KM: For myself, the biggest challenge is staying encouraged. I want to trust in God for my justification and not look fundamentally to my work or the words of men for encouragement. Also, I'm challenged to have the wisdom I need to steward the ministry opportunities before me well while also caring well for my wife and kids.

MVBC: What are you most encouraged by in this season in your life and the life of your church?

KM: I am most encouraged by how my family seems to be settling into this phase of my ministry. Last year was rough, but this year has not been as hard. Though it hasn't been a walk in the park, God is coming through for us in many ways as a family. He has provided for us

financially, he allowed the safe birth of Judah (there were some complications), and my marriage is stronger than I assessed it to be twelve months ago.

MVBC: Why is it important to have partners like us, and how can we most encourage you in your work?

KM: There is a huge disparity between our opportunity for ministry and our financial resources. Finances from saints who care about the work often mean we get double-funded. What I mean is we not only get practical, financial assistance, but we also are gifted with the prayers of the saints, which are invaluable. I also trust that partnerships like ours cause fruit to abound not only to the saints at EBC in Nairobi but also to saints at MVBC in Atlanta. The gospel advance we are witnessing in Nairobi leads to thanksgiving to God at EBC and at MVBC! All this pleases our God, who delights to see his children striving side by side. Funding from a church beats funding from a foundation on any day, all day long.

I love you guys. I'm really thankful for the kindness towards me in 2020—a hard year. I'm truly looking forward to receiving you in Nairobi soon.

Relationships: How Do I Make Things Right?

Written by Sharon Dickens

Have you ever had the experience of meeting with a new Christian and wondered, “Where should we start? Where is a helpful place to begin to answer all these questions?” If so, I would recommend checking out the First Steps series. I was unfamiliar with this 10-book set from 9Marks until I picked up *Relationships: How Do I Make Things Right?*. This book is a helpful resource for discipling relationships with new believers or for those from an unchurched background as they take their first steps in following Jesus.

What did I like about it? The book is short (105 pages), immensely practical, and laid out in a format that is easy to digest. Scottish author Sharon Dickens writes to help us understand what the Bible says about the topic of relationships: how does our relationship with Christ have a bearing on our relationships with family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and romantic interests? Topics tackled include God’s purposes for relationships, the value of discipleship, fear of man, dealing with conflict biblically, and how to seek restoration wisely.

Throughout each chapter, Dickens weaves in examples from a fictitious character named Biddy, who is learning to apply scriptural truths to her own life as a new believer. There are key verses inserted throughout to point to where we see these truths in Scripture. I found myself putting a star next to so many verses because my desire to memorize was being stoked. You have the opportunity to see so much goodness and wisdom right from the pages of God’s Word.

Above all, I appreciated how Dickens repeatedly returns to the idea that God uses relationships to refine us into the image of his Son. Relationships (both healthy and unhealthy) help us spot sin issues in our hearts. James 4 explains that when conflict arises between two people, it usually is because we want something that we’re not getting. Christ-followers need to deal with conflict by showing others the grace, patience, and kindness Christ shows them.

This book builds a simple theological case for how God intends relationships to function and makes frequent use of Scripture and practical suggestions to show how to have healthy relationships that honor the Lord.

— RECOMMENDED BY KATRINA KANODE



Excerpts From the Book

1

“But every relationship faces difficulties, and I know there have been times when we’ve all thought, ‘I’ve had enough--I don’t need this hassle anymore!’ Yet, despite this, God uses our relationships. He’s using them to help us change and grow.”

— Are All Relationships Broken in Some Way?, p.17

2

“Think through the conflict and ask yourself one of my favorite questions: ‘What did I want that I didn’t get?’ or ‘How am I playing God and asserting my own will?’ Ultimately, we have to ask ourselves the even harder question: ‘How am I loving and obeying God in this--and am I loving my neighbor at all?’”

— Dealing with Conflict, p. 79

3

“Here are some pointers to restore some of our own broken relationships: pray, make the first move, rely on God, say sorry, listen, be a peacemaker, remember the purpose.”

— Putting It Right, p. 90–91

Know Before You Go

Written by Gary Miller

Know Before You Go by Gary Miller is a fresh take on short-term missions, with an emphasis on rethinking a pervasive model that is ineffective and, at times, even harmful. The book is directed primarily at those organizing and leading short-term mission trips but is an excellent read for any church member interested in missions or partnering with gospel workers, especially in an unfamiliar cultural context. He begins by providing helpful examples of the familiar short-term missions model and then follows with a better way to approach missions.

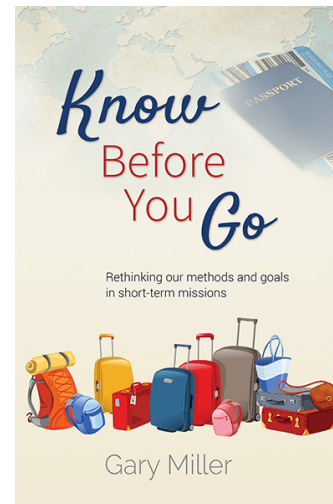
I rarely find a book that I would almost universally recommend to church members and leaders, but this would certainly qualify. It is one of the most clearly laid out examinations of church missions and how to rethink them for success with very actionable application. A few notable points stand out. The first being the need to understand the harm a well-meaning person can do without the correct outlook and training. In one of the early chapters, Miller provides a fictitious example of a trip from two perspectives. One from a western church member who desires to give up some of their time to help in a poor village in Guatemala, and the other from the viewpoint of a local in the village. He outlines how an improperly trained individual can go on a short-term mission trip and cause more harm than good by failing to understand the local culture and long-term goal.

Second, he lays out how to re-wire the thought process around short-term missions. He emphasizes humility and changing our focus to how the gospel can best be shared within the context of the local culture and how we can best support the long-term work there. This fundamental change in perspective works to re-frame the entire mindset and goal behind short-term missions by centralizing the gospel.

Finally, building off the shift in thought process, he outlines the need for better training. Miller explains that great trips begin with great preparation and proper framing. A better understanding of the sending church goals allows for a humble approach seeking cultural understanding and empathy when sharing the gospel.

Overall, *Know Before You Go* is a concise and excellent reexamination of a key aspect of missions that shows, when implemented correctly, churches can encourage their members, support the long-term missions efforts, and share the gospel with the unreached.

— RECOMMENDED BY ALEX FREEMON



Excerpts From the Book

1

“We tend to come [on short term trips] with an assumption that we have much to share but little to learn.”

—What Happened?, p.38

2

“In my egocentric mindset I had assumed everyone wanted what we have and longed to move here.”

—Cultural Conflict, p.61

3

“In addition to encouraging long-term, go with a goal of developing relationships with the nationals.”

—Why Should I Go?, p.90

NOVEMBER

These Scripture readings have been selected to help you prepare for the Sunday morning message. Take Up & Read!

November 1	Acts 19:8–20	November 16	Acts 12:1–19
November 2	Acts 19:21–41	November 17	Colossians 4:1–18
November 3	Acts 20:1–6	November 18	Hebrews 10:19–39
November 4	Acts 20:7–12	November 19	Acts 16:16–24
November 5	Acts 20:13–27	November 20	Acts 16:25–40
November 6	Acts 20:28–38	November 21	Acts 21:27–36
November 7	Acts 21:1–16	November 22	Psalms 32
November 8	James 1	November 23	Psalms 147
November 9	James 2:1–13	November 24	Psalms 71
November 10	James 2:14–26	November 25	Psalms 144
November 11	James 3	November 26	Psalms 11
November 12	James 4	November 27	Psalms 34
November 13	James 5	November 28	Psalms 33
November 14	Acts 21:17–26	November 29	2 Corinthians 8:1–15
November 15	Mark 14:43–50	November 30	2 Corinthians 13:1–10

***Sermons in bold**

TAKE UP & READ



Mount Vernon
BAPTIST CHURCH