



Serving the UNDERSERVED

NEWSLETTER

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Typical ghetto house. This is the outside kitchen and living area, with a covered area for sleeping and shelter from rain to the right, out of camera range.



End of the first ascent to the ghetto church, with five more to go. Total ascent is 1.2 miles.

From Mike -

“How do I convey my heart-felt emotions?” This was the question all of us on the missions team were asking ourselves and each other. It was the common question from the beginning of the trip to even now, more than three weeks after we returned from San Pedro Las Huertas, Guatemala.

We tried to contain this to one newsletter, but then realized there was no way the story could be told in that limited space. So, this newsletter contains the insights of some of the team members, to be followed shortly by insights from others in a second newsletter. During this trip we were able to conduct an eyeglass clinic, paint the San Pedro city hall and a special needs school, and see the ghetto church that you, the Plant Today partners, are helping to plant.

My prayer is that through the following words from team members and through the “eye of the camera,” you will get a sense of the emotions we were all feeling. Try to let yourself be on the trip with us. Try to picture yourself through the words. Try to put yourself behind the lens of the camera. While you are reading the words and looking at the pictures, pray for a sense of what is taking place in each situation.

Mike

[Thoughts from the missions trip journal of Sean \[14 years old\]:](#)

[Second day of trip]

I enjoyed the eye clinic because I saw miracles. The morning went well, with people walking away from 20/70 eyes with 20/30 eyes. After lunch was incredible. Sonda, Mike I and II, Pete, Jacquelyn, Israel, Omar, and I started the journey up the hill, into the ghetto area church. The first ascent sent Jacquelyn escorting Sonda back to the school. Omar said there were five more. We continued the painstaking climb and saw how dedicated the people trying to witness to the ghetto were. They do that trek three to four times per week. The view was amazing and guiltful at the same time. I could see for miles. What made me feel



guilty was the houses. I hate sharing a room with one person. These people had one to two rooms per family. Their homes were sheet metal, trees, and some extra wood. Before noticing the sight, I noticed the smell. Waste, human and non-human, filled the air. Mike (referring to Mike I) kept saying how pictures didn't do it justice. He didn't lie. Pictures of the ghetto will make anyone feel bad, but to really know, you need to experience it firsthand. You need to feel the feeling of sorrow; see the sight of the places they call home; smell the waste; and walk the path that is so steep, so slippery, and so thin to really know.

Thoughts from the missions trip journal of team member Pete:

[Second day of trip]

After lunch some of us wanted to climb up the mountain side roughly one mile to visit the home in which Manuel holds Sunday services for the people of San Cristobel [a ghetto area]. You virtually had to climb up the side of a mountain on mostly narrow dirt pathways. All along the way on both sides of the trail were peoples' makeshift homes, (and I mean homes in the most primitive form) being dug out of the side of the mountain, held together with whatever they could find, sheet metal, rocks, tarp, rope, tree branches etc. Keep in mind there is no running water, no food and the worst yet the stench of human waste running along the trail is enough to make you vomit. Although I have been to Guatemala a few times and know what to expect, I still get emotional. These people are just like you and me except for their lack of opportunities. You see the people in the area and although they are very friendly and never complain, you can see the hurt in their faces. It's the kids that really get me. I think about my childhood and all the fun times I had, then look in the faces of these kids where you see the pain even through their precious smiles. No child, even yet no human, should have to endure this way of life. I guess this is one of the reasons I'm drawn here. I think if I can just make one person feel there are people who care it will carry them through for another day. For those who believe, think of the Faith in Jesus they must have!

As we continued up the mountain we arrived at the two room home [that serves as the church] I believe a family of five shares. The wife was kind enough to show us the room in which the children share during the service. First you must climb an even steeper trail for about 20-30 ft. on rocks and stumps (very dangerous). Once at the room it is typical dirt floor, metal siding etc. Pastor Israel asked us to evaluate the living area and the half built retaining wall (to stop mud slides) and the possibilities of building steps to make it safer. The wife had indicated that her husband was sick in the other room and she didn't want to disturb him. Before we left, Mike asked the wife if we could pray for her husband. Her face lit up with a smile and a hearty "SI" rang out. What happen next is difficult to describe but here goes. Mike, Pastor Israel, Omar, Jaimie, and I went into the other room and found her husband lying on his bed. He sat up and Pastor Israel asked if we could pray for him, which he agreed. We all held hands and Pastor Israel started praying. As the moments went on I felt a strong power enter the room, and as the praying continued on the power got stronger and stronger. Then Mike began to pray, there was a feeling, an emotion, a power that overcame my body. I honestly can tell you I have never felt anything like this before. It almost was frightening. After a few more moments we said goodbye and without saying a word started our decent to the bottom. Once at the bottom of the mountain, I looked at Mike and he



Pathway leading to the ghetto church, part of the 1.2 mile ascent.



The "steps" leading to the ghetto church.



The ghetto church, which is actually the house of a ghetto family. This photo is taken from the pathway that has to be climbed at least 20 feet. The church consists of a room for children and an open area for adults.



at me and we both knew we had just experience something very very special. The Power of the Holy Spirit had engulfed us. We both knew it but were too emotional at that time to even speak about it, it was that powerful!

[Third and fourth days]

We completed the city hall painting project and moved on to Brillo del Sol, a school located in San Pedro. This school specializes in teaching special needs children and abused children. The director, Ms. Lety, was thrilled when Pastor Israel and I showed up to paint the outside walls of their little school. Again, when I say school I'm talking about 6-7 small classrooms and a small kitchen/storage area. The building is constructed with sheet metal roof, pressed wood and concrete walls. Each room is roughly 10'by 10'. They have four very small outhouses that really are disgusting. I believe Ms Lety said there were about 20-25 special needs children that had been turned away from other special need schools in Guatemala City. Also, Ms. Lety has taken in 11 abused children suffering from emotional and physical issues. She did love the color of the paint and after painting the walls it did brighten the place up.

[Thoughts from the missions trip journal of team member Mike C:](#)

[Second day – eyeglass exams in the ghetto area of San Cristobel]

We did 25 eyeglasses appointments. The local people were most kind, gracious, and most appreciative to have us there. I guess the best way to describe it is that the Holy Spirit was there guiding us in a way to help serve the underserved.

[Third day – eyeglass exams at the San Pedro Catholic Church]

To me this was going be a very interesting day. 80% of the area is Catholic and the remainder is Evangelical as I understand it. The priest's representative, Juan, welcomed us and remained with us the entire day and prayed with each person individually. I guess we must have given the devil some inspiration dissatisfaction. It started raining hard and of course added some cold weather to the mix. But the team kept on going with the exams and the people still came. We did 38 eye exams for the day, and prayers. At the end of the day Juan prayed for us and our work in the present and future. He also welcomed us back with open arms and to be of help in any way. The way he said it was so Holy Spirit driven, I could feel it, tears and all. By the way, the bad weather stopped as he was speaking to us and the sun came forth and blessed us . . . for me there was no physical tiredness, but only happy emotions for how the Holy Spirit had stepped in for us and our work . . . it is just an awesome awareness to see and feel such. I feel so blessed to be part of God's work!

[Fourth day – eyeglass exams at one of the Evangelical churches]

We had 40 appointments scheduled for the day. Everything was going very smooth until we ran out of eyeglasses . . . so we started taking orders and just continued on. The prayer time with each person was Holy Spirit filled by Pastor Nery. Our team was in constant motion, non-stop with the exception for lunch . . . everything ran smooth, it had to be God's work not ours.

[Fifth day – eyeglass exams at city hall]

This day we had only 3 hours to examine a total of 19 people. Again we were still taking orders. Felt like I was on a vacation with only 3 hours of work.

I have been wrestling with the question of "why has God keep me here on this earth" for 63 years . . . especially due to all the major medical procedures and



Painting the inside of the San Pedro city hall.



Painting the outside of the classrooms of the Brillo del Sol ["Brightness of the Sun"] special needs school.



Children from the Brillo del Sol special needs school.





Eyeglass clinic held at the Catholic church.



Eyeglass exam in progress at the eyeglass clinic.



Pathway leading to a typical ghetto house.

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wrong decision that I have made in my life. I have been told many times by doctors and nurses that I was legally dead on paper. This mission trip gave me the answer . . . in Philippians 1 (paraphrased), "For God is at work within you, helping you want to obey him and helping you do what he wants. Be ready to speak out boldly for Christ while I am going through all these trials here, just as I have in the past, and that I will always be an honor to Christ, whether I live or whether I must die. For to me, living means opportunities for Christ, and dying-well, that's better yet! But if living will give me more opportunities to win people to Christ, then I really don't know which is better, to live or die. Sometimes I want to live and at other times I don't, for I long to go and be with Christ. How much happier for me than being here! But the fact is that I can be of more help by staying."

So in a nutshell, I have accepted and committed myself to serve the underserved, and this is what God is wanting me to do at this given time or until He changes his mind with other endeavors. The feeling of the Holy Spirit from him makes it all worth it, and observing others feeling the Holy Spirit is also worth it. So this trip gave me an answer that I have been looking for and will be always searching for more of God's answer as they come to me.

To be continued in the next newsletter . . .

Final Thoughts from Mike -

As I write this, several who went on the missions trip are deeply concerned with the heavy rains pummeling Guatemala due to tropical storm Agatha. The flimsy ghetto homes, perched precariously on the mountain sides, are so vulnerable and our hearts go out to those people. Please pray with us as we seek God's wisdom as to how we can help those affected. Our most recent communications with those in the area indicate that the volcano did not affect them, but the storm destroyed many homes.

As a result of receiving this edition of the newsletter in this manner, I pray that you will accept the challenge, "How can I help?" There are several specific areas that we as a team felt needed to be addressed. First, the ghetto church is in desperate need of retaining walls and adequate steps to protect the children who attend. These are estimated to cost a total of \$600. Second, the special needs school is in need of further repairs for their bathrooms and kitchen, at an estimated cost of \$1000. Third, the eyeglass clinic was a huge success, but we came home with many orders for prescription glasses and readers, totaling \$500. While there we gave out over 75 pairs of glasses, but the need is never-ending. Most of the people have never had glasses --- including a 91 year old woman who received them for the first time in her life!

I pray you have been touched by this newsletter and believe you will be equally impacted by the one to follow. Plant Today's mission continues to be Matthew 24:40 - "When you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you did it to me."

Mike

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