

Serving the UNDERSERVED

NEWSLETTER

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- From Mike



Team members arriving at the Antigua hotel on the first day.



Departing for Casa Samuel orphanage.

From Mike -

We are just two weeks back from San Pedro Las Huertas, Guatemala. I have so many emotions going on right now and, from having talked to other team members, I am not alone.

Each and every trip takes on a personality of its own. Each and every trip is unique even though the "task we perform" may be the same. I wish my heart could do this writing to you. There seems to be a loss of intensity, passion, comparison, and emotion when translated from my heart, to my mind, and then to my hand.

From planning this trip last October through the actual trip itself, I knew the tasks we were to accomplish. I knew the deeds we were to do. The unknown is always the spiritual implications. Because we have such a powerful prayer group covering our trips, we can be assured we will feel and see the Holy Spirit at work. **This trip---NO EXCEPTION!** It always starts at the beginning of the trip and goes through the end.

In February 2011 American Airlines changed its policy on the number of "free bags" per passenger to Central America and the Caribbean. I should have been aware of the change but had not read my regular email updates from them concerning baggage. So, at check-in the skycap checked us all in, tagged all the bags (all team members check two bags packed with clothes and goods to give to the orphanage and poor and then they carry on a bag with their personal belongings), and then proceeded to tell me I owed \$210 for excess baggage. I couldn't believe my ears. I asked for an explanation and he told me about the



Entrance to Casa Samuel.



Children at the Casa Samuel orphanage playing with team members.



Team at the orphanage, setting up for eye exams and haircuts.

policy change. I explained to him the purpose of the bags, so he “comped” all but two bags and we had to pay only \$60. He explained that was the best he could do for us, and we thanked him.

Upon arrival in Guatemala City, I just assumed we would have the normal long, tedious track of customs—sending each bag through x-ray, then a hand search of each bag and the need for a full, detailed explanation of the clothes, 35 MP3 players with Dr. Charles Stanley’s messages translated into Spanish, 200 pairs of glasses, soccer balls, footballs and Frisbees. However, God gave us favor with one of the bag porters, who took us to the head of the customs line and, after a very brief explanation, told us to follow him; we walked straight out of customs, without one bag being examined or one question being asked. There was one glitch. One bag packed with children’s clothes for the orphanage had been left in Miami because the plane was overweight. We were not alone; approximately a dozen people had the same experience. American Airlines assured us the bag would arrive on the next flight and would be delivered to us. I was a bit skeptical and worried because our hotel was more than an hour away from the airport. To top it off, we were leaving early the next morning for the orphanage. The team prayed and we left it in God’s hands (well, most of the time). Guess what? **God came through AGAIN!** The bag arrived at the hotel about 9:00 p.m. God wanted those clothes and toys for the kids—He made sure they made it.

The visit to the Casa Samuel orphanage was tremendous! There are 60 beautiful children, from only a few months old to 17. The task God had given us was to provide eye exams and hair cuts for the children and the staff, then spend the rest of the time interacting (playing) with the kids. Pictures can capture some of the emotions but you would have to have been there to understand the full impact. These



kids loved the day so much. They couldn’t seem to get enough of the interaction. When it came time for us to leave, they returned all of the balls to us. You should have seen their faces when Pete told them the balls were for them!



Pastor Israel, Cecelia, and their youngest son traveling with us to the orphanage. Our translator, Omar, is on the right.



The play area at the orphanage. The only grass on the compound is a sparse amount on the soccer field.



Children at the orphanage learning to play American football.

Before I forget to say it, **THANK YOU** to all of you who gave a donation of clothes or money for the glasses, balls, new clothes, etc. You certainly made a huge investment in these kids' lives.

I would be remiss not to give you an update on Tina, who is pictured here. For those of you that have become friends of Plant Today more recently, two years ago some partners of Plant Today provided the \$7000 needed for Tina (14 months old at the time) to have a necessary open heart operation. Tina is now a very healthy three year old running and playing with the kids!



If you should feel impressed to do so, you can make a donation to Casa Samuel. They are privately funded and receive no government funds because they want to be able to operate as a Christian orphanage. They have monthly financial needs as well as project needs. They need money to finish construction on a new cafeteria and classrooms that will allow them to have nearly 100 students. They also have the need for funds to complete a security fence around the entire compound. On behalf of Casa Samuel, thank you for what you have done so far and whatever you can do in the future.

During my personal devotion time Friday morning, the Holy Spirit directed me to Hebrews 13:1, "Keep on loving each other as brothers. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for in so doing you may entertain angels." That scripture really captured me, and my mind went back to the day before at the orphanage. Little did I know how this scripture was going to fit in with the devotion Pete was about to bring just a little later that morning. Pete based his comments on Psalms 139, which was displayed on a wall at Casa Samuel. He also played a song he had recorded on his iphone, "Give Me Your





Mike, Pastor Israel, and translator Omar with the executive director of Casa Samuel.



Typical working woman in the city square, after gathering something in her backpack to sell at the local market.



Pete painting a classroom at the special needs school, Brillo del Sol.

Eyes” by Brandon Heath. Go to Psalms 139 and read verses 7-10. If possible pull up the song on your computer. WOW!! This song set the theme for our time in San Pedro Las Huertas.

“Give me Your eyes” Lord so I can see. “Give me Your arms” so I can reach out as You do. This trip was about not getting so caught up in what “we” are doing that we miss what He wants us to see and then fail to do something about what He has shown. Our visits to San Pedro Las Huertas are to help with physical deeds, but we must never get so busy in doing the deeds that we fail to see and fulfill a need of the moment.

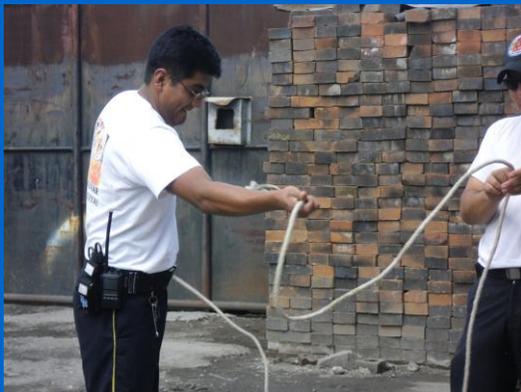


Some of you joined the team in fasting and prayer for the trip. One of the things I had asked God for during this time was to reconfirm to me Plant Today’s assignment in Guatemala. God is so faithful to answer our prayers. The first confirmation was that the church Plant Today was called to help plant in the ghetto area, San Cristobel El Bajo, is growing! They now serve an average of 40 children breakfast each Saturday morning, followed by a children’s service. In addition to this there are two Bible studies for adults—one on Tuesday and one on Thursday—plus an afternoon service for the whole family on Saturday afternoon. They have 8-10 families at this service! Again, thanks to all of you who supported this outreach.

The second confirmation was when Pastor Israel and Cecilia shared how much Plant Today’s support has meant to fulfilling their God-given vision for the community. They expressed unequivocally that without God’s directing Plant Today to their community, it would have been impossible to impact San Pedro as rapidly as they have and to such a far reaching extent. They are so thankful and appreciative to everyone. I mentioned in the last newsletter some of their immediate, on-going project needs. The purchase of land for the community center is \$8000, and Plant Today has pledged \$2000. We also committed \$2500 to help build a classroom at the public elementary school. Thank you for anything you can do.



Fire/rescue training: how to rescue trapped people.



Chief Carlos practices tying ropes during training.

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God's third confirmation was particularly meaningful to me. As you know, we have been providing training for the fire/rescue workers in San Pedro Las Huertas and Antigua. They have told us how much that has meant to them and how they have been applying what they learn and the tools we have provided. That was great but I wanted to know that we had made a spiritual difference. On Saturday morning, Carlos, the Chief of the San Pedro firefighters, ask if he could speak with me for a moment. I told him certainly and so we stepped outside to talk. He wanted to personally share with me that the months of Plant Today coming and demonstrating the love of Jesus had caused him to ask Jesus to be the Lord of his life and now he is serving Him. Chief Carlos told me how God had transformed his character and now he wants to be all he can be for Jesus. That was the confirmation I needed! Again, THANK YOU for praying and giving to make it possible to see lives transformed. I had heard of other "transformation testimonies" but this was the first one personally given to me.

God is always faithful to complete the work He has begun. Yes, the deeds we were assigned were definitely accomplished: two days of training for the fire/rescue workers; two classrooms painted at the special needs school Brillo Del Sol; the orphanage visited, with eye exams, haircuts, and about 150 pounds of clothes provided, plus hours spent inter-acting with the children; 37 haircuts given to local people; and 129 eye exams completed.

THANK YOU! On behalf of Pastor Israel, Cecilia and hundreds of people in San Pedro Las Huertas, thank you for your investment in prayers and financial support.

Sincerely,

Mike

P.S. My oldest grandchildren thought we needed a presence on Facebook so, courtesy of Maia and Sean, you can now find Plant Today there at:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Plant-Today/113050335445964>

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