



Serving the UNDERSERVED

NEWSLETTER

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This is a new barrio we visited, where people are “squatting” on government land. About 200 families live along this one street. The houses set three and four deep along the road, with anywhere from six to 12 people per house.



A young brother and sister inside their barrio house.

From Mike - 2013

Many of you have been asking about the trip to Guatemala the team



(pictured here) made April 23 to 28. Thank you so much for making that trip possible through your prayers and support. Your prayers covered us throughout, and it was a GREAT trip! Two team members commented several times that it was the best trip yet. That is a result of God always doing what He promises—His Word and His presence are new every day. As we draw near to Him, He draws even nearer to us. As we follow Him in obedience, He blesses us even more.

There are so many stories to tell that it is hard to decide which ones to relate, so let me begin by telling you about the orphanage we support. We spent a day there giving eyeglass exams and haircuts, playing with the children, and handing out toys and clothes. Tina, who is shown with me in this photo, was 17 months old when Plant Today donors provided for her open heart surgery. She is now a vibrant, healthy four year old!



A few months ago a little three-month-old girl arrived at the orphanage; she



was EXTREMELY malnourished. She weighed only about three pounds, was so weak she could not hold up her head, and could barely move her arms and legs. She is now six months old, weighs about eight pounds (the weight of many newborns), is very alert, and holds herself up! As you can see from this photo, she is certainly far from the weight and appearance of the six-month-old babies we are accustomed to seeing.



Children we met in the barrio.



A woman in her kitchen proudly shows off her makeshift table and stove. Sadly, the only food she had was one small pot of beans for her family of four. This is a typical kitchen of a barrio house. The cooking takes place outside, sometimes under some type of covering but often in the open.



People wait for the opportunity to have their eyes examined at one of the eyeglass clinics we held. We provided 131 examinations this trip.

Just a few days before we arrived, the orphanage received a six-day-old baby that had been abandoned. As you can see, he is a beautiful little guy, and is the same weight as the malnourished six-month-old!



The supporters of Plant Today have provided so many good clothes to the children that now the local school children call them “the rich kids from the orphanage!” Recently we shipped down a number of beach towels that had been donated; the children loved this, finding it hard to believe that they actually had towels of their own!

These are just a few of the stories represented by the 60 children at this orphanage. Regardless of their previous lives, each one now has a story of being loved and cared for by a wonderful staff of “house parents.” Through Plant Today you can support the orphanage, which receives no government funding and operates solely on donations. We provide funds at various times, conduct eyeglass clinics and give haircuts when in the area, and ship in clothing whenever possible. On behalf of these 60 children, THANK YOU!

Unless you have been to Guatemala, your American mind simply cannot comprehend the living conditions of 90% of the people in the rural areas. Look at



the photo to the left and try to imagine your home having only dirt (mud if it is rainy) for a floor. If you are lucky, your roof is tin (with holes in it) that was discarded by someone else—but cardboard or sticks if you are not so fortunate. The walls are made of similar materials. Imagine using paper of any kind to keep out the wind and rain—and think about how long that will last! Think about having one small pot of beans to feed your family of four today,

and no idea how or what you will feed them tomorrow. Think about your eight-year-old daughter falling and having a skull fracture. You don’t have the money to get medical care so they tell you to go home and keep her quiet for a few days while it heals itself.

Painful as it is, these are the types of things we saw and experienced on this trip. As one of our team members observed, being there “is like having a reset button” pushed in your head, reminding you of your comparatively luxurious lifestyle and driving home the great physical and spiritual needs of the people.



Now, imagine desperately needing glasses just to be able to see shapes and images, but having no means to get them. Then you hear that a group is coming to your barrio to provide FREE eye exams and FREE glasses! You will finally be able to see to some degree! Two different women who came to the eyeglass clinic experienced exactly this.



Family members of a 92-year-old woman bring her for an eye examination.



Medical training was conducted for a record 43 rescue workers who came from several different fire departments.



Rescue workers participate in classroom instruction.

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This trip we provided 131 eye exams. We examined one woman who had a reading of 20/40 and 20/50, but apparently had astigmatism that we could not correct. No glasses worked for her, and she needed more professional help than we could provide. As is our practice, after the exam we sent her over to have prayer with people from Pastor Israel's local church who accompany us at each clinic. About an hour later Pastor Israel asked if the woman could have her eyes rechecked. We agreed, not realizing that the prayer she had just participated in had resulted in a miracle: she now had a reading of 20/20 both near and far!!

Team members also helped a family patch its leaking roof (photo below)—the same family I referred to earlier that had one small pot of beans for four people and no other food. Fire/rescue training was conducted, with a record number of 43 people coming from various fire departments to receive basic medical training. We were also able to take in some vital equipment that had been requested and donated—blood pressure cuffs, a glucometer, and a helmet.



These are the stories I would like you to contemplate, the everyday realities of the people we are serving in the San Pedro Las Huertas area—like the little boy pictured below. Please ask yourself, “What can I do to make a difference in the life of just one of these?” You can pray. You can give. You can go. You can make a difference in a life by “refusing” to do what you may have done in the past—which is letting someone else do what you were suppose to do.



The singer Josh Wilson has a vivid demonstration of this in his music video on YouTube called “I Refuse.” Listen very carefully to the words of that song, where he notes how easy it is to close your eyes and act like everyone is alright; how it is easier to stand and watch, then say a prayer and move on like nothing is wrong. However, the singer realizes he no longer wants to live like he doesn't care, or say one more empty prayer. He is not going to sit around and wait while someone else does what God called him to do; he is now going to do what God created him to do.

Please take the time to listen to this song, then—if you haven't already—take action! Get involved and begin to do something! Join the many of us who are “refusing” to “sit around and wait” by partnering together with us at Plant Today to make a difference!

In Him,

Mike

