

To the brethren in Porter,

Grace and peace in Christ Jesus abounds. May you be content in that whatever God sees fit to send your way is what you are need of at the time, and may we be thankful that His ways are not our ways.

Just as Paul was thankful in his every remembrance of the church at Philippi (1:3), so too do I remember with fondness the years I spent learning the Word of God from you all. The church of one's youth should always hold a special place, and it is no different with me. Likewise, Paul gladly received monetary gifts from the Philippian congregation (4:15-18); so too I received a gift that allowed me to spend a week in the mission field of Honduras.

Along with 8 others brothers and sisters from the church of Christ on McDermott Road in Plano, Texas, I left for a rural area of Honduras on May 27<sup>th</sup>. The trip was mainly medical in scope; an optometrist and MD were part of the group to give eye exams and glasses to the brethren in Honduras as well as hold medical seminars in which we learned of the various diseases the local brethren have to deal with on a daily basis, as well as local services, medicines, etc. to combat those diseases. Secondary goals of the mission trip were a distribution of children's under garments, donated by the McDermott Road congregation, and construction projects to improve the homes of certain members.

Through the work of the McDermott Road elders and Bro. John Hendry, the deacon over the Honduras mission field, 8 churches have been established throughout the Olancho region of Honduras. The poorest of the regions in Honduras, the villages and towns in this area are beset with poverty and very difficult living conditions. Most residents lead a subsistence lifestyle and money is scarce. The local culture and the system of education lend themselves to this poverty. Yet the Word of God is Truth, and souls are being added in this region despite (or perhaps, because of) these difficulties.

While meeting with the 8 congregations over our one week stay, we performed our four tasks for every place: the medical survey of diseases and medicines, eye exams, under garment distribution, and floor construction. These 4 tasks were deemed as necessary because the need was so great for these things. While the first three and the need thereof are self-explanatory, the fourth needs further elaboration. Most homes in this area of Honduras have dirt floors. With them come insects as well as large fluctuations in temperature during the different parts of the year. As a result, people who live in homes with dirt floors are much more susceptible to sickness and ultimately a shorter life span. A concrete floor, on the other hand, eliminates all of the above and lends a better, healthier lifestyle. It seems hard for us to believe that something we consider so basic to be such a lifesaver, but literally, it can be one. However, the cost of the building materials is out of reach for many residents. For us, however, all materials can be bought for approximately 45 dollars, and labor is provided free of charge. We can, therefore, for little cost to us, provide a huge relief for a fellow brother and/or sister in Christ.

One of the leading reasons for the poverty seen in Honduras is the education system. Attendance is compulsory through the sixth grade. All education after that year, however, must be paid for, with the proceeds going to the state. If people cannot pay, then children at the age of 13 no longer have any

place to go during school hours. This also happens to be when their bodies begin to change, and kids who would otherwise be in school with requisite safeguards against intimate relations have none, and the result is “babies having babies”. This, in turn, restarts the cycle of poverty, as now a child with few or no marketable skills now has a mouth (or more) to feed. To exacerbate this problem, it is common in Honduran culture for men to leave a girlfriend or wife during the pregnancy or shortly thereafter to find work in another town. They usually find either work or another woman, or both. Whether the money makes it back to the girl with the baby is usually a less than 50-50 proposition.

It is this fact of Honduran culture among males that presents another problem in the nascent church: finding men qualified for leadership positions. The members of the church in Honduras are God-fearing, and the sanctifying power of Jesus’ blood cleanses them from their sins. Of this there can be no doubt. However, the past does haunt the men, even the ones in preaching positions, as most if not all of them have at one time or another been a victim of their culture. The result is a church whose leadership is in the hands of the preacher. The ones I met during my trip were fantastic men of God’s Word. They are preaching the Word to a people that are in desperate need of it. They work hard to distribute foodstuffs and other goods to the community, all in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ. Membership does ebb and flow, just as in America, but the work continues nonetheless.

As it pertains to my contribution to this mission trip, I ended up being the “young, healthy body” that worked on the cement mixing for the floors we laid. I signed up for the trip first, so what the trip would contain was an open question when I signed up. As more people signed up, and their medical skills were offered, the trip became medical in nature. As I have no medical skills, I knew my contribution to the mission trip would be in the laying of the floors. However, God works in very mysterious ways, and upon reflection of the trip, I’m not sure that He didn’t have another reason for me to be there. There is a man in our “hometown” of Gualaco named Antonio. He is part of an English class that the Peace Corps is teaching down there. His skills are actually quite good. The optometrist on our trip, Mike Phillips, had bought him a bilingual Spanish English Bible to help him further learn English. I saw that as Mike presented that Bible to him, he was very happy to receive it, but there was some doubt on his face. Mike then mentioned to me after Antonio had gone to talk to someone else that he didn’t feel that Antonio would read that Bible, but that he didn’t know how to show Antonio how to use it. My teaching skills had just come into need! I spent the next 20 minutes talking to Antonio in Spanglish in a conversation that must have been hilarious to hear. But I think I showed him how to use his new bilingual Bible. Perhaps that was my greater purpose for this trip.

All in all, this mission trip was an incredible experience that I hope I will be able to enjoy again. I have taken up reading a bilingual New Testament in the hope that I will be able to discuss the new covenant with Spanish speakers if I ever have the opportunity again.

In Him,

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