

Wednesday, April 12, 2006

Friends, Family, Co-Workers:

It's been a couple of weeks, since we returned from El Salvador. I am still processing this experience, but it has been another impact journey.

Instead of providing HIV/AIDS information, God had other plans for us. We ended up teaching English Classes to students at Complejo Educativo Concha Viuda De Escalon, a school in San Salvador. The school originally resisted the proposal from Victor Turcios, the pastor at Iglesia Gran Comision. However, the doors were opened to teach the students English and share our faith with them, in a government school. Most teachers were supportive and we got to teach a few hours per day.

The time with the students was very valuable. We were able to develop relationships over the week. They were able to ask us questions about the United States and our faith. We handed out 210 New Testament bibles from money collected at The Rock. Several students brought them back to class each day. It was tough to leave them on the last day. There is a heritage of teaching in my family and I now understand their passion for it.

Our team also served painting the Iglesia Gran Comision, interacting with children at Jardin de Amor AIDS/HIV Orphanage in Zacatecoluca, and praying over the city. A few team members lead the music at the addictions seminars, while two team members presented the addictions material from Celebrate Recovery. We were all encouraged by the response and questions raised at the Addictions seminars. A couple of the students made it to the seminar the second night, which was a considerable distance from the school.

We had the privilege of staying with host families. Within an hour, I learned what "Mi Casa, Su Casa" really means. Our host families modified their schedules, sacrificed their time and resources and served us from start to finish. Each day our team met at Pastor Victor's house for breakfast, devotion, reflection and prayer and planning time. The majority of the other meals were also at Victor's. His wife, Silvia, and a team of women from their church prepared phenomenal food.

Our translators were all high school seniors from San Pedro Sula, Honduras. They traveled several hours by bus to serve on this mission. Luke, a teacher at their school from Michigan, chaperoned the group.

The trip taught me about being flexible and trusting in God's plans. I learned we can't be effective if we are disconnected from Jesus Christ. A verse that has really stuck with me is John 15:4, "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing." It was interesting to see how each team member was assembled together for the big picture.

As Easter approaches, I am in awe that a perfect man would take on the world's sin, my sin, all at once by dying on that cross. He bridged the chasm between man and God. I can't imagine what that must have felt like. Jesus talked about his death bringing life to many in John 12:24; "The truth is, a kernel of wheat must be planted in the soil. Unless it dies it will be alone-a single seed. But its death will produce many new kernels-a plentiful harvest of new lives."

I look forward to serving again in Latin America or other areas of the world in the future. In the meantime, the mission is in Minneapolis.

Thanks for you support.

Sincerely,

Joseph Schmoe