

Bringing Hope to the Philippines

Cockroaches, Birth Certificates, Beggars and a Hot Christmas: The Other Life of a Missionary (Dec. 10th, 2009)

What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you think of a missionary? Wild adventure, preaching the gospel to thousands, translating the bible in some strange language or something else? Well, those things do happen and we have had the chance to do some amazing things this past year. Things like expanding the feeding program to Rosemarie and having the opportunity to preach a lot have been some of the highlights for me. Last week I had the opportunity to preach at Ate Jenny's church, Free Methodist Urban Ministries, and it was a very cool experience.

Seeing the staff and leadership grow is also very encouraging and inspiring. Just the other day I was helping one of the staff with a report for a sponsored kid and they wrote, regarding the sponsored kid, "Seeing a smile on their face is like vitamins for my heart." It is so exciting for me to see that they have caught, at least in part, the heart that God has given me for these kids.

But sometimes, the life of a missionary is not so glamorous and can be rather mundane. Let me share a few things that we have experienced this year. Things that happen in the real life of a missionary. *Cockroaches*. They are evil. One of the places I first stayed in when I came here had so many that I could throw a crumb on the floor and only had to wait about two minutes before one would scamper across the floor and take it away. We've even been woken up with them crawling on our legs or in our hair. Its quite entertaining to watch your wife, who is half awake, run across the room smacking the ground with a sandal and screaming as she tries to put the strange bug out of its misery!

Birth Certificates. Well, we finally got the application sent away, but getting Judah's Canadian birth certificate has been a bit of an adventure and a test of patience (note: it stressed me out way more than Liz, she is so patient). It was hard because we did not get the right stuff the first time around because we really did not know what we needed and because its not always

easy to understand the local systems here. Well, needless to say, Liz was a trooper. She stood in line for hours getting what we needed. We were not expecting it to be so difficult.

Beggars. As a missionary, I have not really figured out how to respond to people asking for money on the street. How do I respond as Jesus would respond? Do I have a right to question their motives? Am I not called to help the poor? Well I have not figured it out, but the other day I was on my way to a meeting and needed to stop at a restaurant for a quick bite to eat. As I was going in a small girl was begging for some money. I brushed past and tried not to make eye contact, thinking, oh she is probably forced to do this by her mother and is probably not that poor... a shining moment as a missionary! As I sat and ate my meal I heard the words of Owen Scott (my pastor in Canada) ringing through my head, "Better to err on the side of mercy than the side of caution." As I finished my meal I folded up a bill in my hand and told myself that I'd give it to the next person who asked me for money. Sure enough, the same little girl asked me as I left the restaurant. I tried to hide the bill in her hand and walked away with a smile on my face. Normally people might only give her a peso or two (which probably explains the look on her face), so maybe it was not an appropriate amount, but it was more about me keeping my heart soft. Something that is surprisingly easy to lose, even as a missionary.

A White (HOT) Christmas. There is something hard about trying to feel the spirit of Christmas when its 35 degrees Celsius outside. We really miss the snow and we really miss our families- especially with Judah to show off. Don't get me wrong, I don't miss having to plug my car in every night so the engine won't freeze up. I love the heat here. But Christmas just ain't the same without snow on the ground.

But you know, somehow, these are the things that make living and working as a missionary so rewarding. And sometimes, I think that I am the one being changed more by being a missionary than the people that we serve. **Please continue to pray for the precious kids of Davao and for HFTN.**



Field trip to Mcdonalds. Each kid saved 60 pesos over a 2 month period to go. Benjie is trying to teach the kids the value of saving money.



Reggie, visiting from YWAM, telling the kids bible stories on Saturday morning.



Judah. He loves... I mean loves this book!

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