

July 2011

Dear Friends,

As the sun sets on another day here in Texas, I realize that I'm not the same person that left a few weeks ago to share the gospel in a small village in Nicaragua. I have to be honest; at first, as it was drawing closer, I wasn't as excited about this trip as I've been in the past. That all changed when I was making some last minute purchases for the trip, and I met some youth who told me they were getting ready for Vacation Bible School here in San Antonio. It finally dawned on me that in less than a week, my team from Leon Springs Baptist Church and I would be flying to the Land of Water (Nicaragua) to host VBS in San Benito. That got me going!



*Merle with the team from his home church,
Leon Springs Baptist.*

I've been on and led many mission teams in the past, but with this team and this trip, I experienced God in a new way. So, first of all, I'd like to thank my American team—you guys did a great job. I also want to thank the Nicaraguan team for the planning and interpreting. Finally, thank you to the home team and Anna for all your prayers and support. You are as much a part of the team as anyone who flew to Nicaragua.

I don't normally like statistics, but we took 160 New Testament Spanish Bibles, 200 toothbrushes and toothpaste, and 288 balloons to make balloon animals, and we only brought back 50 balloons. We were able to share Bible stories with the kids there, about 30 in all, and a Men's Bible study with Jose, our host in the village, and three other men. It was an amazing time, and even though the bus got stuck in the mud at one point, the seeds of the gospel were still planted! In the village of San Benito, we found children with chickenpox, and some of them had rashes that we later discovered were scabies. There was a medical clinic near us, so on Saturday, some of the Nicaraguan team and I took moms and children there for medical help. We saw about 50 or 60 different kids throughout the week, and on Sunday, about 19 or 20 children indicated they would put their trust in Jesus Christ to save them from their sins. After the sermon by Dean Chollar, 11 of the 14 men and women indicated they had trusted Christ for the forgiveness their sins.

I then shared this story with the pastors of a larger church in Nicaragua: When a person becomes a new Christian, he is like a baby in a basket. God places the babies on the doorsteps of your church, and it's your job to bring them in and hold them, feed them, and teach them to grow up as Christians. My desire is to go or send another team to San Benito to help these baby Christians keep growing until God raises up a pastor to feed His children.

Brothers and sisters, would you consider sharing some of your time and resources to come with me to the “Land of Water,” and together we can start feeding these new children in Christ? You will not come back the same person, and the friendships you develop could last into eternity.

Also, would you pray for the families of San Benito in regards to their property titles? We want to drill a well for them, and we have funds for it, but until they have titles to the land they live on and can give us a document for community property, we can’t drill the well.

As for me, please keep me in your prayers. I hope to make one more trip to Nicaragua and San Benito to begin the discipleship program for our new brothers and sisters in Christ. Also, we are working in a town called Los Velasquez to drill a well for a church and the community there. We would like to install a water system for the community, but we are working now on drilling the well and inserting a hand-operated water pump so the folks there don’t have to travel so far to buy water. The well and water would be free of charge, except for a fee to maintain the pump and well.



Merle with a youth pastor in Nicaragua.

My final concern is in late October or early November, CrossWay is sponsoring a Pastors’ Conference in Nairobi, Kenya, and I would dearly like to accompany Dean to the conference to renew some old friendships and work on our clinic in Ethiopia. Would you pray God would give me the wisdom and the finances to make this trip?

Thanks again for your time, prayers, and support.

Grace and peace,

Merle

Central American Director for CrossWay International