



One of These Days...

First STM – Guatemala

For several years, I had desired to go on a mission trip. My father, Robert Hoagland, DC, had been on multiple short-term mission trips (STMs) to Jamaica with the CCA and returned with stories of how God moved in various ways. I would often say, "One of these days, I am going to go"...but, for various reasons, "One of these days" was put off and not a priority on my list. Almost twenty years after I first felt the call to go on an STM, I attended a study of the book *The Hole in Our Gospel* at my church and felt the desire being rekindled. As a result of that study, multiple people went on various mission trips, reaching from Africa to an orphanage in Haiti to a daycare on the south side of Chicago to a local food pantry, as well as others. Finally, after even more time passed, I asked some friends in my weekly men's group meeting at church to, "Hold me accountable to GO!" That meeting was closed in prayer with that specific request brought to God.

The following day, God answered that prayer! Adam Reed, DC with *Caring Partners International*, who is also a CCA member, called me regarding an inquiry that I had emailed him several months prior. I had never spoken with Dr. Reed, yet I immediately knew that this call was not a mere coincidence in timing, rather it was God's perfect timing. In December of 2013, he invited me to go to a rural Guatemalan village located near the active Pacaya volcano. His team consisted of seventeen others, including two neonatologists, an ER physician, a dentist, a pharmacist, and five nurses along with five other very talented people. We all came from various backgrounds, yet our common goal of attending to the healthcare needs of a very undeserved people and showing the love of Jesus Christ was exactly the same. After each of the 987 people was tended to over four days, they were directed to the Clinic of the Soul. This is where they would individually be lovingly told about the Gospel message. As a result, 273 of them made decisions to follow Christ.

Among those 273 that accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, there was one particular young boy that forever will be etched in my heart. He came to the clinic for various healthcare needs, which included spinal care. As he approached the table to sit down, I noticed that his zipper was down on his shorts. I jokingly asked my translator if this was the trending style here since he was one of many that morning that had had the same issue. She kindly pointed out to him that his zipper was down. He softly replied to her, in Spanish, that his zipper was broken, and it was the only pair of shorts he had, which he had found lying in the street. As she translated his statements to me, my heart was immediately very heavy. I had to compose myself in order to deliver the needed care to the young boy. After I finished adjusting him, Pamela, the translator, sat and spoke with him to learn more about him and pray with him. She learned that he had started walking by himself to the clinic at 5:00 am and arrived at 11:00 am. This eleven-year-old boy walked in very mountainous terrain for six hours from a small village



Pamela praying and talking with Emmanuel, who walked 6 hours to reach help from our team.

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Guatemala, concluded,

named Dolores, which in English translates to "pain" for very apparent reasons. She shared with him the Gospel message and asked him if he could read. He replied that he could not read and was unable to afford the basic necessities to attend school, although he would like to be able to go to school. She asked his name, and he replied, Emmanuel. She further asked if he knew the meaning of his name, which he did not. She shared with him that the meaning of his name is "God with us." He asked, "Do you think my mom knew what my name meant when she named me?" Pamela replied, "I don't know, but I do know that God loves you." He further asked her, "Why do you care about me?" She told Emmanuel that Jesus loves her and has taught her how to love others and to know that He would never leave him alone.

As I returned home the following Sunday to my home church, we fittingly sang "Emmanuel" for our Christmas service, and our focus verse of the week, which Dr. Reed had also shared with us, was Mark 8:36, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" If you are currently someone like I was a couple of decades ago, saying..."One of these days, I'm going to go." I encourage you to not just say the words like I initially did, but to pray about it and seek God's guidance, and GO!

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