What is God teaching us right now?

Dec 07-Feb 08

I would have to say – that would be the sovereignty of God. We have seen over and over – How God's sovereignty is ALWAYS operating in our lives – whether we are aware of it or not or if it makes sense or not.

We have returned to Guatemala after 2 months in the US for the holidays with family and to visit some of our supporting churches and friends as well. We were in Reno and No. Calif during this time, so we didn't get back east at all – next time though! It was really great to see everyone. Rachael and Tyler had not seen our families for 3 yrs, so it was time! Young people change after 3 years! We also had wonderful visits with churches and a couple of Christian schools in the Reno area. We are always so blessed by the kids when they catch a vision for reaching out at a young age. One young man raised his hand during a question and answer time and asked if we would take him back to Guatemala with us! We assured him that it's all in God's timing! We experienced such sweet generosity from the kids - it's awesome. We also were incredibly blessed by great fellowship and generosity from our church families and friends. How can we thank all of you???? God has truly blessed us with the most wonderful people in our lives. It was marvelous to spend time with each and every one of you – we do miss that fellowship now and then, but we know we'll be with you again in God's timing!

Rachael was able to be in Reno for 2 months also – it all worked out so beautifully – her med school here in Guatemala allows for the 5th yr. student to have 2 months of elective study – to concentrate on their area of interest. We were able to get all the paperwork through and lot of details worked out – so she was able to spend 2 months in Reno as part of her schooling requirements! How good is God!? It was a bit of a shock to her = seeing medicine practiced in a country other than Guatemala. One example – she was asked to look at some xrays – so she went looking for the xrays and the viewer – couldn't find them ANYWHERE! The doctor called her back to the desk and told her to sit down – the xrays were all on computer! Her pronunciation of bacterias etc in English was a source of amusement for the folks there too. However – when asked how to say it in Spanish – they couldn't come close either. ☺ Her Spanish came in very handy many times in the hospitals dealing with pts. who spoke no English. She actually made rounds in the same unit that I spent 15 yrs in before we moved to Guatemala! I spoke with some of the girls that are still there – how weird is that – my daughter making rounds in the place I use to work!? Very cool. It was an incredible learning and growing experience for her all the way around. Again – how can we thank you all that helped with EVERYTHING – those families that we stayed with for 2 full months – the cars we drove – the cell phones we borrowed – this list goes on! We love you guys so very much and will always be so grateful for your help and for being part of our lives.

We were also able to have our STM board meeting for the first time, in Reno. The Comstocks made the trip out from Michigan as well as our board member Dr. Dave Ledingham from Michigan. Our other 2 board members are from Reno. Pastor Mark Evans (who takes care of all the financial "stuff" for us in Sparks, NV (right next door to Reno) was unable to attend due to that flu that went around during the winter. We missed him but we had his input from some phone conversations. Jerry Mitchell is another board member, long time friend in Reno. He and his family hosted all of us for the 3 days of meetings and some "out of this world" meals!! We were most definetly spoiled! There were lots of things to discuss during those 3 days – we managed to talk about all of it – and we had some time to show the Comstocks and Dave some of the beauty in and around Reno. It was a great time of relationship building amongst us. We're praying about having our next meeting here in Guatemala!

Upon our return to Guatemala, we were welcomed for the first time, by a "Welcome" sign at the airport. We are normally the ones to make the signs to welcome (ok, embarrass) folks when they arrive. This time, Rob and Paula had arrived back in Guatemala a week before we did – and they welcomed us with one of those signs! It brought a big smile to our faces.

It felt so much like coming home, it was great. While we had an awesome time in the US, we missed home – so it was comforting to be in Guatemala again.

Our first visit was to see Veronica and the folks in San Antonio. There was mutual excitement to see each other. Hugs that have been waiting for 2 months are so great! ☺ Veronica is feeling well, still with all of her energy and giggles. Her older brother Esving, who had accepted Christ this past summer, is now Secretary of the church there! He is also an active part of the youth group! How exciting to see him become involved and dedicate himself to things of God. But wait! That's not all! A young man, Carlos (maybe 23yrs. old), who also accepted Christ this past year, has become very involved as well. He is a leader in the "drama team" that was initiated by one of our youth teams last summer. Well….. while we were up in the US – Carlos wrote his own drama and taught it to the youth there and they did it for the church at Christmas time!! It taught about how in God there are good things, and that the world doesn't offer these same good things. They will do it for us the next time we're there. Ok – so – imagine how excited we are to hear about this!? Carlos is anxious to be able to go with us to other villages and minister to other young men. It is so obvious that God has some BIG plans for this young man! Please keep him in your prayers!

Next we went up to Liquidambo. It was great to walk into the clinic – it's like home! And so wonderful to be greeted by our fiends up there. As we were inside just looking around – Fransisco's mom, Nicolasa (the mother of the young man who cut his arm with a machete last May) came and asked for medicine for her hands. And THEN….she asked for PRAYER for healing. She started coming to the church services after we were able to help with Fransisco's arm. I almost fell over, then jumped for joy, when she asked for prayer! I was smiling while praying! How amazing is this – a total testimony to how God can work through what seems to be a horrible situation. In case you don't remember – they all thought he would lose his hand or never be able to use it again. Today, his hand is fully recovered and functional! Today, the whole family is in church and are hearing the Word, and are now believing in prayer and in the power of God! Amen!

After praying for Nicolasa and thanking God for how He is working in Liquidambo – we were anxious to go up and see Milia (3yr old severely malnourished, prone to lung infections). We packed up the food we had brought for her and her family and set out on our hike. We were rejoicing in the goodness of God on our walk up the hill. As we arrived at the house, I looked at Lorenza (Milia's mom) and I knew immediately that something was not right. I ran to the door and she had brought Milia out to the door – little Milia was barely breathing. There was not time to even get her down the mountain. Within a few moments, she stopped breathing but her heart was still beating. I tried to do everything I could at that moment, with CPR etc. A few minutes later, very sadly – I had to tell Lorenza that Milia was gone. We were in tears and in shock. Rob and Paula were with us – we all kept reminding one another – God knows. This is when we should know and trust in God's sovereignty – though it makes no "earthly" sense. Which are we faster to arrive at first…. doubt…. or trust. Well, we needed to get back down to Zacapa that night and Steve and Rob made Milia a little wooden casket and we also bought her a little white dress and blanket to be buried in the next day. We went back up early the next morning. The family really wanted us to be there with them – their custom is to bury 24hrs. after death so that would be about 4:30pm. Lorenza asked us to stay. You must understand – that part of the "neighborhood" is very hostile and violent, the men drink and are very abusive. They have never been part of anything we are doing there in Liquidambo – and are mostly of Catholic origins. We wondered if we'd be allowed to stay, but they not only allowed us to stay – we actually had conversations with several of the men there that we have never spoken to in the 6yrs. we've been up there! When it was time for the prayers later that day – they asked Steve to pray!! This was HUGE in our relationship with these folks! Then it came time to carry Milia from the house to the gravesite (they had already asked me to do all the preparing of Milia – cleaning and dressing and laying her in the casket and Steve was allowed to help dig the site) – the custom is for women to carry a female and men to carry men – no one jumped up to volunteer, so they looked at me. Before I knew what I was saying, I offered to help. One of them looked at me and said "Please carry her". Gulp. I wound up needing some help from a young girl and we both carried little Milia down the mountainside a little ways – I was praying deeply as I had to walk backwards. God's grace and mercy was amazing.

This all was so big and frankly – unbelievable, even to us. Talk about how God can work through what seems to be a horrible situation! These people have not spoken a word to us in 6yrs! They asked Steve again to pray at the grave. Afterwards, a couple of the men said they would come down to the clinic the next week and one of them is waiting for Steve to come back and talk more about the trees! The way that God so beautifully orchestrated things there…doors FLEW open that day, where they had been slammed shut for so many years before that. As we think about all that has happened through the testimony of Milia's life – how with a little help and LOTS of prayers, she had been able to walk and then run with the puppies, and then laughing and playing in the dirt – we KNOW that God has and will continue to use this for HIS glory. We know she is not struggling anymore, we know she's in the arms of Jesus. We PRAY that the folks there have seen the love of Jesus through all of this. We are RUNNING through those open doors! Be encouraged and rejoice with us.....
…….because of God's goodness, because of God's sovereignty…and because…..God knows!

Answered Prayers and Requests

+A wonderful trip to the US and safe return to Guatemala for us and the Comstocks
+Spiritual growth in the people, for that enthusiasm to grow into a deeper faith!
+For wisdom and direction in this next year – that it be God's will that is done!
+For continued financial provision – for STM and work projects He will call us to accomplish and for each missionary here
+For Charlotte Gepford – our new intern who'll be here from March-Nov. Pray for her in this prep time
+For Rach this year – she's back in Guatemala and an intern now, with students under her supervision for this first 6 months. For anointing on her brain and for stamina and health
+Tyler is back to using books this year vs. computer – he still does NOT like to study, but he does it. That he would have the desire to learn and study! He's wanting to join the youth worship band at our church here in Zacapa!
+For Robin – I'm leaving for Romania, leading a mission trip, Feb. 11th – 25th. It's a medical and construction team of 5 from a couple of different cities. We're believing for GOD things! ☺
+For the needed energy, health and safety for all!!
+For the incredible, faithful people God has put in our lives!!!..... each of you. For blessings upon blessings in your life!

So….God's sovereignty. That seems to encompass so many things in our lives. I guess the reality is that it encompasses EVERYTHING in our lives. How comforting to know and be able to trust in that, every moment of every day – no matter what we face. I pray this is of comfort to your heart – that there *IS* a sovereign God who is in control of *IT ALL* and in whom we can trust to have it all under control – whether we understand it, or if it makes sense to us or not. The undeniable fact is……GOD KNOWS. May your heart be at peace, knowing this. ☺

Know also – we love you so much and thank God for you in our lives! We are so blessed!

In Him,

Steve, Robin, Rachael and Tyler

Financial gifts to:
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