



WHERE IS OUR HOPE??

Fall 2008

As promised - a few little stories that I wanted to tell you about. A triple wedding in Liquidambo! It was three brothers marrying the girls they have "joined with". Steve and I were not able to be there, but we saw the pictures and heard the stories. This was during this past summer. Some of you may have heard about the custom in most of the mountain villages - they normally do not marry with an official ceremony - but rather they "join". The man goes to the girl's house and asks her if she wants to come with him, and if she says yes, then he asks the family for permission. If all agree, then the girl usually goes to live with the man's family or in a house near by the man's family. Sometimes it can be the other way around too. It is always a blessing to see couples make a public, legal, and before God, commitment to each other. At the time these weddings took place, we had a team here, so Rob and Paula and the team members were invited and were given front row seats! A funny story.....we won't mention any names ☺, but as the bowl of corn drink was passed around for all to take a sip, one of the ladies on the team thought she was supposed to wash her hands in the bowl - so she put her hands in and began to wash. ☺ She was quickly stopped, but we were told it was a pretty funny moment. It's a good thing our friends in Liquidambo know that we are naïve about some of their customs - they are very forgiving of us! ☺ They just laughed along.

Another fun moment - we are doing more house visits now in Liquidambo - we are received warmly and openly. We're visiting in places that have begun to be more open to us since we began the house to house corn delivery. I try and remember to bring my stethoscope with me on these visits, as one never knows. ☺ This particular day - we were visiting in a fairly new neighborhood for us, and I had my stethoscope with me. The young girls wanted to hear their own hearts, so I let them listen - and each one without fail - just giggled and giggled. It was a lot fun.

Now I want to talk to you about a deep subject. ☺ Actually it's no too deep yet - but we are praying it will be!! Late in the summer, we began to dig a well in Liquidambo - in hopes of finding enough water to last throughout the dry season (the 6 months that it doesn't rain here). We're hand-digging the well as it's impossible for machinery to get up there - and besides - since when do we ever do anything the easy way?! ☺ Two girls from our last summer team were digging for 3 days - each day getting deeper - and muddier! The 3rd day - they came out of the hole (almost 6ft deep by then) and they were covered in mud - but they assured us that they were having fun. ☺ Since then, Steve and Rob have dug to almost 10ft deep. They stopped going deeper so they could get cement all around the walls of the well - so it doesn't collapse in on them. They will continue to go deeper once that's done. Steve thinks it may have to go 40 ft deep - approx. ☺ Please pray that we will find water - and that the water we find will NOT be dependent on the rain, but that it will be a consistent, abundant and clean source of underground water for all to drink and use.

Since we're talking about Liquidambo, we are so excited about what we've been seeing and feeling there lately. Tyler has come up with us several times lately - and one evening he decided it was time for him to get up there with his dad and help lead worship. It was amazing watching father and son with their guitars in ministry. Very cool! ☺ We have set a weekly schedule for ourselves and as a result - have been able to do much more consistent home visiting all over the valley. We've felt more freedom to go further now. It's a whole different thing to know them in their homes. People have also been coming to the clinic from further away. The word (and THE WORD) is out! ☺ I have also been separating the kids for the church services. They love the felt board - they are actually participating with me now. It's exciting to have them getting up in front of their parents and raising their hands to help me tell a story with the felt figures or raise their hands in praise. The adults were receiving a teaching for a couple of weeks -and then we did a drama with the kids - explaining the same lesson the parents were receiving. We think *all* learned the lesson well. It was fun too! ☺

God has been showing us in a new way these past few weeks - *where our hope is*. You have been hearing about baby Emerson. A few weeks ago, on a Monday morning I woke up and *knew* I had to go and see him. I cancelled all the plans for the day - and Charlotte and I went to see him. When we got there - it was obvious there was something drastically wrong. Inside the house - the family had lit all the candles and were basically preparing for Emerson to die. Within a minute or two at the most- Emerson stopped breathing. I put my hand on his chest and declared in Jesus' name for him to start breathing - and he did. This happened a second time within a few minutes. As I scooped up Emerson in my arms, his heart stopped beating for maybe a minute or so - again I declared that his heart beat in Jesus' name - and it did.

I was about to start CPR, but God acted before I did. I was able to convince the family to let me take the baby to the hospital. He was severely dehydrated and needed fluids to survive. We went - quickly. ☺ The docs gave me no hope for survival - but we declared that we believe in miracles. In the midst of all this - we had picked up Rachael to come with us - we think we saw Emerson smile at me. She told me she thought he was hanging on for me. "Gulp".

The next day, Emerson was still alive, but not waking up - looking like he would never take a bottle or anything ever again. I was horrified and could not believe that God would basically bring Emerson back from death - to be a vegetable for the rest of his life. I can't describe what I was feeling that day. I spoke to a pastor friend of ours and he encouraged me to step out again, to pray and *believe* for healing. So I did ☺, with the parents by my side I prayed in Spanish so when Emerson woke up - they would know what God had done. The next morning - we arrived at the hospital - Emerson was awake and had just taken his bottle!!! I wanted to jump up and down and run around declaring God's goodness to anyone who would be in my path. ☺ I wound up going out into the parking lot and just weeping - for the joy, relief and overwhelming love I felt for the Lord at that moment. Ps. 138:1-3,8. On Thursday of the same week - we took Emerson home - and he continues to improve daily. The doc also diagnosed Emerson with Hypothyroidism - he is receiving medication and seems to be responding. He is trying to crawl now! Pray with us for this precious baby!! There are so many people's lives that are being affected by the testimony of what has happened in his little life!! *So where is our hope?* I have heard myself say to so many people during my nursing career - we are never without hope. This came to me in a deeper revelation during these past couple of weeks. If our faith and our trust is in Jesus and Him alone - NOT in the circumstances that we see around us in our lives, or even in other's lives - we will always have hope. The circumstance can't take away our hope - if our hope is in Jesus, because He cannot be taken away from us. It almost sounds basic, but what's in my heart is so much more. Does any of this make any sense to you? ☺

If this wasn't enough to testify of ☺ the very next week - we took Lester David (a 4 mo. old baby from another village) to the hospital in Guatemala City - he has a severe heart condition. Another one of those moments that God just told me - "take him now" - so we did. By the time I got him to the hospital, he was barely alive. They told me he has too much damage to his heart and was not a candidate for surgery - that I should take him home to die. They also told me he would most likely not survive the ride home (a 6hr drive). The mom was with us - we all cried - and prayed our hearts out - that God would sustain Lester so we could get him home alive (his father could have been violent with the mother and us, if the baby died with us). Not only did God sustain Lester to get home, but He gave Steve and I a wonderful time of sharing hope, in Jesus, with the father and those around when we arrived. This was almost 3 weeks ago from this day - and Lester is still alive and doing well. God knows how many are Lester's days here on earth - and he is spending them happy with his parents. We are still praying for healing!!

By the way - baby Feliciano in Liquidambo is growing into an adorable, healthy baby boy! Gabriel too! We praise Jesus for the miracles we have seen. Keep praying for all of these babies! They are so precious and their lives are being used to speak to so many about Jesus' love for them!

The church in San Antonio is growing rapidly, in numbers too!! ☺ We poured the floor - 12hrs and 87 mixes in the cement mixer! Yikes! We had lots of help from the folks (adults AND kids) in the village. It was a hard day of work - but we laughed alot too! At the same time, we have a friend here who is painting a wall size mural on the wall behind the altar. It is gorgeous, the people can't stop smiling when they look at it. The scriptures they chose to put on the wall talk all about Living Water. The people in the church have paid for lots of the supplies lately for the finishing coat of the stucco work - of their own initiative! We love that. ☺ We're looking at inaugurating the church sometime during the first part of next year. We'll let you know! Rachael and I have started a discipleship group with the teenage girls in the church - ages 14-19 - there are about 10 or 12 girls. We wanted to give them a forum to learn the bible and at the same time - have a safe and private place to talk and ask "those" questions that young girls deal with. This past week - we had a really great time of being open and vulnerable with each other. We had to have our most recent meeting right outside the bathrooms in San Antonio - there isn't any other place that we could go and get privacy! Our family was totally laughing at us - I was praying I wouldn't fall backwards - right into one of the toilets! You do what you have to do, right??! I have to say, what is really cool too, is ministering side by side with my daughter!! What an incredible feeling. She even said it - "we make a great team". ☺ Please pray for this group of young girls - that God will reveal Himself to them in the decisions they face right now and that Rachael and I would be able to truly minister to them in this very important time of their lives.

Since we've been spending more time with the youth, we wanted to go and do something fun with them - this was AFTER they asked me if we could take them to another village so they could minister with drama and preach the Gospel - *THEY* asked ME! ☺ We did exactly that - and the kids were awesome - they are very dramatic (hard to believe especially coming from teenagers! ☺). They sang in worship, and prayed - it was a blessing to see them wanting to reach out in this way.

Carlos has made a firm decision to continue working in the ministry and with us. He needed to come to this decision on his own - we let him have time and allowed God to work in his heart -and when we came together to talk - he basically had already made up his mind - to continue in ministry. We're all excited about the possibilities!!! We do need to let you know of some sponsorship already received for Carlos - but there is still a need for more. As God leads your heart - you can send any offerings to NV. Carlos is trusting God to supply all of his needs - we know that **GOD KNOWS!** - so we are resting in that. ☺ Anyway, back to the fun - the other fun ☺ - we were able to take the San Antonio youth group to Lake Isabel for a day. The Comstocks came along and helped out too. We all had a blast playing in the water and eating, and playing some more etc. It was an awesome day of fellowship and friendship building.

Our friend Corie, who came to paint the mural on the church wall in San Antonio, took this time and asked if he could be baptized here in Guatemala with us. Wow!! The same day he finished the mural, we had a service to celebrate - the church and pastor are so grateful. Then we took 3 truck loads of people with us and we went to the river - and Steve had the privilege of baptizing Corie! It was an awesome moment, what a blessing for everyone.

Our family photo this year is taken at the annual Kite festival just outside of Guatemala City. Some of the kites are 30ft across! They only fly the ones that are 20ft across and less - all are made with 100% tissue paper and bamboo - they DO fly! ☺ We took Veronica and her brothers and sister this year - they had their mouths pretty wide open at first - amazing to see such huge kites! Keep praying for Veronica - she's having more bad days than good ones this past month or so. Our trust and faith is in Jesus - therefore - we **always have hope!** Romans 8:28

Praise Reports/Prayer Requests

- +All of the babies mentioned in this letter - health, growth, HEALING ☺
 - +Laura - she did not have the heart surgery, she decided against it. We are praying for health and healing for her heart!
 - +That the people witnessing miracles would realize Where their hope comes from, and desire Jesus in their lives and hearts
 - +Deepening faith and trust (and hope) in Jesus for the believers here, and all of us too!
 - +Our intern Charlotte is returning to the US Nov. 10th after 8 mos. here, pray for this next step in her journey with the Lord, and that she will hear God's voice clearly for her life. We thank her for the 8mos. she has been here serving, from the bottom of our hearts - we'll miss her!!
 - +Rach and Tyler as they finish this year - for grace and anointing during this home stretch!
 - +Financial provisions for all aspects of STM and missionaries. Still praying for a truck. ☺ God knows!
 - +Against our enemy - he has been rising up strongly in new ways -We will NOT give in to the fear and doubt, but rather we choose to walk in the victory we know we have in Jesus!! Amen!
 - +The Comstocks will be in the US (Michigan) for 2 mos for the holidays. For refreshing, and for awesome time with their families and friends - especially their dearly missed grandchildren.
 - +I will be spending a few weeks in the US (NV, NC and MI) - speaking in churches and visiting with friends and family. May I and the Comstocks be a blessing to those we have the honor to speak with.
- For the Brauns - for peace in all of our hearts while I'm gone.

Speaking of Jesus and *hope* - as we approach the holiday season - we know that many are going thru difficult economic times etc. We feel it too. It seems that the deeper revelation of where our *hope* is, has come at the perfect time for us. Jesus was born a baby, came to the earth to give us an *eternal hope* - this is a *hope* that NO circumstance can take away from us!! We pray for each of you - that your hearts may be full of hope during this season of celebrating Jesus' birth. We wish you a very Merry Christmas, and pray blessings for each one of you. We pray you know how much we love you and thank our God for you!

In Him,

Steve, Robin, Rachael and Tyler

Financial gifts to:

Strong Tower Ministries
PO BOX 50628
Sparks, NV 89435-0628

Specify gifts:

Brauns - "fund 2" in memo
Comstocks - "fund 3" in memo
Rach med school - "fund 2R" in memo
Carlos - "fund 6" in memo

email: guabraun@gua.net
Web page: check out "recent photos!"
strongtowerministriesinternational.org
Cell ph: 011-502-5723-7048
Home ph: 011-502-7941-0366



**DAY AT THE LAKE
W/YOUTH FROM
SAN ANTONIO**



**EMERSON IN HOSPITAL
BABY FELICIANO
"HE'S AWAKE"!!**



**CHARLOTTE
FINGERNAIL PAINTING
(THIS BECAME A
FAVORITE 😊)**



**PAULA & SANTOS, HOME VISIT
A WELL IN LIQUIDAMBO!**



KIDS RAISING THEIR HANDS IN PRAISE



**THE CHURCH
WALL... "BEFORE"**



**CORIE TEACHING ESVGING
ABOUT PAINTING**



**CHURCH FLOOR AND
MURAL IN PROGRESS**



**FINISHED MURAL
GIRLS DISCIPLESHIP GROUP**



CORIE BEING BAPTIZED!



**IN FRONT OF THE
BATHROOMS**