

Day Six account to our Dear Ones,

The devotional today, from 2 Timothy 2:1-8, focuses on extending grace, persevering by faith, and finishing well. As the Lord would have it, by day's end and virtually every day here, we are "graced" with many opportunities to practice these life lessons. And so we learn to give thanks in all circumstances.



The apostle Paul, in his final pastoral words to Timothy, first compares the persevering, grace-filled believer to the good soldier who must endure hardship, avoid distractions, and please his commanding officer. Hardship strikes in many ways—as when overwhelming heat forces all of us to take breaks, seek shade,

water, or a portable fan—or all at once, as with Casey and Sue. A flat tire sidelines our overloaded bus, symbolic of many bumps along the way. Plans change by the hour, and not just due to bus breakdowns, yet we persevere, always "ready to go," as we follow our leader. Electricity cuts off sporadically and we make do. Many kitchen conveniences are missing—no microwave for popcorn we brought, Oh my! Mosquitoes carrying the dreaded disease *Chikungunya* are also missing, so far; but like a good soldier, we wear our body armor at all times just in case.



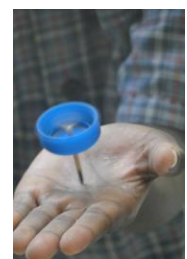
Second, in Paul's letter to Timothy, believers are like athletes who must train and compete within the rules of that particular sport, or otherwise fail to win a prize. When we arrive today to play the host team, we are easily awed; there is even a 10-year American pro pitcher, José

Jiminez, who stands head and shoulders above us. The rest of the team looks equally intimidating. So, like the good sports they are, they integrate the teams and play on our side, as well; so we pitch & catch, hit & field, fairly (L-R: Brennen, Rick, Vicky, Betsy). Game ends 5-5. Also on "our side" are many little fans



that we attract wherever we go.

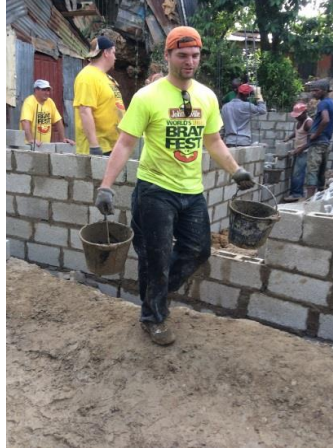
Beyond baseball, local Dominicans improvise; "drag-racing" (at right)



has new meaning as do "spinning tops" (above)—this one made of a plastic water bottle cap and a wooden matchstick. Now, why didn't I think of that?



Thirdly, in 2Tim 2, we are likened unto the farmer, who works hard to receive a share of the crops in due season. No one works harder than the house crew. We



do not finish what we start—that will be up to the Dominicans, who have out-worked us and out-served us. But we do provide funding, planning, encouragement of our presence and much sweat equity to match their investment.

Church leaders gather to answer our questions, translated by Martires Olivera (*in red*), head of the Chrisitan Foundation for Community Development. Our conversation ranges from housing, to health, to nutrition, to how are they supported. We are surprised to learn none of the five pastors are paid by their



churches, rather just the opposite happens, as the poor come to them for support. Even Ernelio

(*above*), who superintends six churches he founded in the area; he supports himself in construction. Others in sales of pillows & shoe trees, fruit, sandals; with no paid work, one lives with his son. One wonders about sponsoring a pastor , as well a child (at \$32/month), so that benevolence can happen at



their discretion, instead of coming out of pocket. We ask about their “wish list” and what they’d do with a “blank check,” they share modest goals in housing (at \$5000 US dollars, apiece)and in health areas; plus a basketball court to engage youth.

Looking ahead, we note that a health clinic is coming in, that basketball hoops

are going up. By directing house construction and sandal sales to the locals and by going through the church, this creates paying jobs, the community will develop, and the churches will finish well. *Gloria a Dios. Amen.*