

The dreaded “Days After” June 21-28, 2014

Dear Ones, regarding a period of adjustment and a more personal, particular account of our DR trip,

As a first-time volunteer with Hands of Hope, and as a veteran of many other wonderful mission trips, on our final night together (June 27) I share with our team— and now also with you—my biggest concern: *Upon returning home and distancing myself from this mission trip, just how will “the week that was” ever be sustained in all its wonder and joy and blessing?*

Some fall-off is inevitable. I have enjoyed many wonderful weeks of mission (Nicaragua, China, NOLA, NYC), but sadly not much lasting change. I often get challenged, even emotionally engaged, by the deep unmet needs of people that tug at me; yet when other responsibilities beckon and life returns to normal, such enriching, empowering cross-cultural experiences dissipate and lose their hold on me. The missionary high slowly mellows, the blessing soon moves on; daily blogs of inspiration become daily slogs of duty.



*How will things be different this time around? I wonder. How will the hope, as in Hands of Hope, be sustained? I want to know. How will my life and that of others change—here and now, and forever? I ask God. And I dread not knowing.*

Imagine my delight when Nic’s sermon Sunday morning, back in my home church, is focused on hope. Our pastor makes several points, preaching from Colossians: Hope is the wellspring of faith and love,... that hope is kept for us in heaven,... that heaven is a place and time where God reigns supreme and reconciles all things to himself. Being heavenly-minded by a sure and certain hope of glory is what compels and completes the Christ-follower,... therefore we persevere by faith, radically loving others. Such hope fuels us to do good here and now, as no redemptive work needs doing in the hereafter....

By this point, if you cannot avoid the stare

and tug of this little boy, neither can I. He grabs hold from the first welcome night to the last farewell party. Some find their sponsored child online; we may have found ours in *el hoyo* (“the hole”) in the barrio *El Amirante*, where we built the house.

I learn from his mom Elizabeth (*below*) that the boy’s name is *Josue* (pronounced “Joe-sway”), that he’s in school (age 5, just eligible for child sponsorship), with a sister Ashley (age 4), and thinks portable fans are “cool.” Sadly, mom is so poor she moves back in with grandma (*hut below, just around corner from above*). Though trained as a nurse, she quit work to care for two kids after her husband left. She gets some support from a church where she leads Bible studies. Sue and I hope to be another source of support by sponsoring her child, writing letters each month, visiting next year.

*Did I just commit to Hands of Hope in the DR for 2015? Yes.*

In the weeks to come, as when writing daily blogs from the DR last week, I’ll give voice to more than just what I go through, or what I will do to keep hope alive now that I am back in Madison. Until the next time, *a Dios, amigos*.

