

A Prison Break! — Honduras March 20, 2023

[Eight of us experience Prisoners of Light @ Olanchito, Yoro, Honduras Prison and experience a prison break of our own!]

There is no way I can describe what happened in there.

As we turned over our passports and walked toward the solid metal door with a peephole, then through that door to the bare, concrete holding area in front of another solid metal door with a small window, prisoners began excitedly whispering and running through the narrow perpendicular passageways beyond.

I'd been inside this prison before, but no one else with me had been except our translator. I hadn't seen this activity before, so it was a bit unnerving, partly because we had five precious young women with us. But I quickly had inner peace and a spiritual impression that all was well and everything was alright.

We hurried into the hallway, turned left, and followed the narrow passageway lined by some prisoners, making 2 90° turns, right then left, until we emerged into the open-air courtyard. It was surrounded by high walls topped with Concertina wire and a guard tower manned by a uniformed guard with an automatic weapon.

Immediately to our left, seated in many straight rows, were 150+ prisoners who began to clap loudly — applaud thunderously is more like it — our arrival!?

Totally surprised and somewhat embarrassed or humbled by such a warm reception, we waved sheepishly at the clapping inmates. We continued walking to where we were motioned, to our seats at the front left side — very close to the prison worship team.

There was a warm and impassioned welcome to our team by the prison pastor, who is also an inmate. And the inmates echoed his welcome with thunderous applause.

Our Honduran translator Kerlin stood up at the front by the pastor and translated Spanish to English for our team when appropriate or as needed. After their welcoming remarks, Kerlin invited me as the team leader to speak to the prisoners.

I gave them our greetings from the United States, our Arkansas church, and the Covenant Life Fellowship brothers and sisters in Louisiana who had visited before. I had seen enough of their Spirit-filled worship to tell them, "Don't be

surprised if there is more spiritual light in here than out there.” This was followed by loud applause. I told them we experienced a waterfall of the Spirit as they worshiped so freely and passionately, and thanked them for letting us share the experience with them.

I recounted that I had been inside their prison five or six times during the last ten years. We weren’t allowed to visit in 2021 and 2022 due to COVID-19. They nodded appreciatively their understanding and thanks for trying. I recounted how small the Christian group of prisoners was ten years ago, maybe 15 to 20 inmates meeting against the western wall. Most of the other inmates were milling around the courtyard, with some of them heckling. Five years later, the number was about 50, and you had a small area set aside for worship and meeting. But now!?!

Now you have this large, orderly area with about 80% of the prisoners [about 150 of 200] worshipping God at the top of your lungs! This is a beautiful and fantastic move of God!! *Gloria a Dios!* The prisoners greeted this comment with thunderous applause.

I told them we had prayed for them as we came, now while with them, and would when we leave. I told them we had a small gift of toothpaste and toothbrushes — hopefully, to make their lives more comfortable or bring a little joy. And I gave some directions about how we’d give them out at the end of the service to avoid chaos or confusion.

Next, Kerlin announced that one of our team members had a word he wanted to share. Colt, twenty-something with a youthful appearance and weight—lifter’s physique, stepped up to the front, and a member of the prison worship team handed him a microphone. He spoke with a very serious, calm, and intentional demeanor — never smiling because his word was serious.

Colt first said that the thunderous clapping as we entered the prison courtyard had moved him. “It’s humbling to be so warmly welcomed by 150 men,” he said. The prisoners applauded this remark in acknowledgment, and the playing field was now level. We’re all saved by Grace, and this has been acknowledged.

Colt then said, “I want to read a Bible verse that I’m sure is for one or more of you listening to me.” He then read: “This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19). He repeated, “You haven’t come to a knowledge of the light because you love darkness more than light.”

That was about it. Colt repeated it as his eyes scanned the inmates scattered in the courtyard listening intently, about 20-30 men, and the inmates seated in front of him, about 150 men. Then he sat down. It seemed like his whole talk was only 2 to 3 minutes.

There followed more thunderous, Spirit-filled worship — maybe 3 to 4 lengthy songs led by the excellent, energized vocalist and worship leader who glowed with the presence of the Lord, standing alongside a gifted keyboard player.

There was a little more energetic preaching. The pastor invited our ladies to sing a worship song. With a lot of courage and little hesitation, they got up and stood before 150 men, impromptu, and sang the Revelation Song (Holy, Holy, Holy, Santo, Santo, Santo, Is the Lord God Almighty, Who was and Is and Is to come...). I'm sure the beauty of women's voices brought a flood of emotion and meaning to men who were separated from women and their families due to their mistakes. They seemed appreciative and a bit awed by it. I'm not sure how many inmates understood the English lyrics. But they applauded the courage and beauty of their worship.

I can't help but think many were touched and remorseful as they thought of their women and loved ones they had failed, but perhaps some were given hope and new resolve to get out and do right — to properly love and provide for their precious ones. God only knows their hearts.

At the end of the service, the pastor gave an invitation, and seven men came forward to receive Christ for the first time. This we learned later from our translator communicating with the prison pastor.

The pastor asked if our team would like to pray for them, and as Kerlin was finishing translating his invitation, the team shot forward, laying hands on them and praying for them for an extended period. It was a powerful and beautiful time while the other prisoners worshiped loudly.

Then the service was over, with the pastor delivering more passionate remarks. The prisoners were dismissed orderly, and the toothpaste and toothbrushes were distributed as they departed, mostly with calm, joyful smiles.

We were in the prison for at least two hours, but it seemed like 10 minutes due to the unanticipated waterfall of the Spirit amid their worship. That will be my enduring impression and memory of the whole affair, along with Colt's words and Scripture, boldly delivered, and seven souls rescued from darkness to begin walking toward the Light and in the Light as the Spirit brought conviction and revelation through the Word.

It was time to go, and we walked quickly back through the narrow passageways into the holding area and then out into the guard's place. As we collected our passports and awaited a guard to unlock the front gate of the prison, I felt surreal peace and immensely blessed to have experienced something so unusual, supernatural, and unique. I'll never forget it — especially the palatable presence of the Spirit.

As I stepped on the bus our driver had brought around to pick us up; I said to the rest of our small troop, "Wowie Zazowie!!" Then after a pause: "What just happened in there!?"

[Everyone smiled at me, and no one said a word — sitting silently in awe and mystified wonder.]

That's still how I feel five days later — What happened in there!?

March 19, Sunday, the team was up early after arriving late the night before. Dwayne lead the devotional on the patio, then breakfast was served by Martha, and the team boarded our bus to experience another culture's church service in Olanchito. After some worship time, Pastor Dario welcomed and introduced our team to their congregation. Our team also led some worship in English with Vinson leading. Then Pastor Dario, learning that Tim and Lindsay had lived in China for six years, invited him to speak to the church saying, "Brother Tim, tell us about China."

Tim read a passage of Scripture from Luke 14 about people who were invited to a fabulous banquet by a wealthy master, but many made excuses and didn't come. The master told his servants to go out into the highways and byways and invite the lame, poor, and anyone who would come. The servants did so, and reported this to the master and that: "There is still room."(v22) The master sent his servants out again.

"The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.' "Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.' "Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full. I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet'" (Luke 14: 21:23 NIV).

Tim chose to tell this Honduran church about how the underground church in China had ignored and not evangelized the Tibetan people because they were “idol worshipers” and chose willingly to ignore God and go their own way. Tim mentioned also that a very, very small percentage of Tibetans had ever heard the name of Jesus.

Then there was a major earthquake in Tibet a few years later, and the Chinese church decided to send humanitarian and spiritual help. They were well received and many came to Christ. The Chinese church repented for exclusivity and admitted their failure in going to Tibet with the Gospel, as commanded in the Great Commission.

After hearing the story, Pastor Dario said to Tim, our team, and his own church, that this was a word for the Honduras church. He went on to say, “Everyone in Honduras has heard the name of Jesus and the Gospel message.” But the Honduran church has been like the underground Chinese church and judged that the people who haven’t responded to the Gospel or accepted Jesus were doing so because that was their choice. Therefore the church wasn’t going out into the highways and byways any longer like they had a one time.

“Now we’re hearing, ‘There’s still room,’ and we’re failing at going out again. This is a good word for us, and one we need to hear.”

“There is still room” seemed to become the main theme or word from the Lord for our team and our mission.

March 20, Monday, 0545L, up to shower and head to the porch for the team devotional time led by Taylor. I am so proud of her. She was a little reluctant, fearing her word wouldn’t be somehow good enough, but I encouraged her it would be while at the same time allowing her to bow out gracefully or delay it if she wanted. She did it! Her amazing heart for the Lord and people showed through as she read from John 10. Jesus said, “I have other sheep that are not of this fold.”

Her remarks sparked an invigorating team discussion about the passage and why we were there. Little did we know, at this point, that would be a theme from the Lord for our whole time together! :):) And into our futures... Other verses given at different times, not planned or coordinated, would confirm that.

It's interesting, as it weaves its way, what the Spirit was saying at the prison, where seven men came to Christ, at the pastors' conference, and as the groups shared (more later on that). Marilyn shared the same theme on the front porch about the college environment in Tegucigalpa with Kevin, Vinson, and me. The leading university in the capital city is much more like the USA than I expected, with secular humanism and LGBTQ+ pushing their agenda and religion intensely. Still, the Spirit's theme is, "There is still room" for them and any who will hear and come to the Light and the Lamb — at the Master's table.

Thank you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for eyes to see and ears to hear. Amen. When we returned from the prison with our team of eight, we learned that Vinson's teaching went well and was well received.

We also learned after Vinson's teaching that the rest of our crew spent two glorious hours playing music, singing, and enjoying each other's talents, interests, personalities, and giftings — loving each other in joy!!! TYL!!! The Honduran students and Martha were the main attraction at the musical and cultural, sharing of hearts with worship.

I want to hear more about this from those who experienced it. Vinson has shared a good bit about how special it was to see the incredible talent Gio is! He said you could hardly pick a Christian song he couldn't immediately play and sing in English or Spanish! :-) More on this later.

We had dinner at 6:30 PM with the Honduran pastors and families. This was delicious fare — simple, home-cooked, over a wood fire in an atmosphere of comfortable company between two cultures of brothers and sisters speaking different languages. But we loved each other in words, deeds, and heartfelt hugs and handshakes. It was something to experience.

This team makes it so easy with their desire to serve and love and be honest. I think the youth of the bunch helps, too — they are open to new experiences and not afraid to wade in there and investigate or enjoy relationships.

The Spirit of God is the "X factor," moving like the wind among us and leading loving hearts and people into meaningful relationships with loving hearts and people. :) Amen.

Anyway, Monday was a day for the record books!!! Fun and fulfilling for the team — full of spiritual adventure around the Lord and His word — with His Spirit moving among us and through us.

It started with Taylor's devotional, with all of us chiming in, and worship with Vinson's guitar.

It moved to Kevin's teaching the pastors about faith in an engaging, Spirit-led way that promoted much interaction and discussion. The rest of the team not involved in construction or electrical projects prayed and listened at the back of the pastors' conference. It was a powerful and beautiful combination.

While the teaching was going on, Scott worked on electrical problems at the mission house and began rewiring the watchman's house. Colt and crew (Annie, Esther, Daniel, and Joshua — sometimes Scott and Vinson) were demolishing the old outdoor kitchen at the watchman's house and building a new roof.

There was a break for lunch which we enjoyed with the pastors. Then Vinson taught the pastors in the afternoon about daring faith — Commitment. During this time, eight of our team members made a ministry trip to the prison in Olanchito. Wow!!! (See previous journal entry.)

The six who stayed at the mission house enjoyed a music and fellowship time with Honduran pastors, youth, and church. It was a beautiful, relational, bonding, and discipleship experience while the others continued to work on electrical repairs and the watchman house. Dinner was enjoyed with the pastors, their families, and each other.

Afterward, there was free time to share the day's activity and an early bedtime — exhausted but happy and fulfilled by the day's events and spiritual encounters.

Father, You are so good! Thank You for meeting us at our points of need and joy!! Thank You for gracing us with Your help, presence, and joy!! Amen. :):)

March 21, Tuesday, 0530L, I was up early to review my teaching material only to discover the electricity was off in the mission house and had been since about 2 AM when the fans stopped, and the white noise gave way to heavy rainfall on the metal roof over our heads!! Glorious sleeping conditions for me. :)

Laying my cell phone flashlight on the bathroom sink pointing downward made a faint glow I could shower by.

Martha made breakfast at 6:30 without electricity, using a candle and the propane stove. Kevin and Colt were quickly heating water for coffee by her side. The team headed out onto the patio in the early morning dawn for our devotional led by Esther. She chose First Corinthians 13 and spoke about love — loving the unlovable. She also talked about how love touches the heart. Her sharing was insightful and powerful and sparked a good bit of discussion.

Tim wrapped up by reading a Psalm the Spirit had put on his heart. Vinson then led us in our short, beautiful theme song, “It’s a Beautiful Day,” and someone prayed over our breakfast.

As we got our plates and sat around the long table at 7:10 AM, Pastor Dario walked in through the patio door. The fans started turning simultaneously — the electricity was back on! Quite a dramatic and powerful entrance! :-)

Dwayne kicked off the pastors’ conference for that morning on Faith with “Daring to Wait” and finished the session at 10:30 AM. After a 15-minute coffee and stretch break, Tim and Lindsay began the last session on Faith. Amazingly they covered the material speaking Spanish! Kerlin was present for translation or Spanish assistance as needed.

The pastors became engaged, although it was not initially evident. After the teaching, the Fosters had the groups number off and discuss what they have heard and planned to do with what they heard.

Their enthusiastic reports by group, after discussions showed they were motivated to take action and they conveyed specific types of action each would take going forward.

Pastor Dario made some closing comments and praised the teachers saying, “This is what we needed to hear, and to be challenged.”

We enjoyed lunch together. The construction team working on the watchman house roof all morning was the last to join us.

After lunch, Pastor Dario had an hour-long discussion with the pastors before dismissing the conference. Some headed home in the afternoon, and some stayed to fellowship and enjoy the quiet, beautiful solitude of the mission house and grounds, leaving the following day.

At 2:30 PM, our whole team boarded the bus for Los Encounters, about a 10-minute drive up the Mamee River to hold a service in their tabernacle and witness a baptism of a new convert (Rosaleo Lyon) in the village.

In a surprise announcement on the bus en route, Pastor Dario said, “Brother Dwayne, will you do the baptism?” I tried to suggest Tim do it, but Dario seemed to want me to do it. So I said, “Of course.” It is an honor and a command of our Lord (Matthew 28:19-20.)

Even though I wasn’t appropriately dressed or prepared for the happy occasion, still in my best clothes from the morning teaching session, I decided to embrace the opportunity. Vinson offered his quick-drying sandals, and I emptied my pockets into my backpack. We stepped into the swollen river, and the beautiful celebration was done. I asked three questions: “Do you believe Jesus was the Son of God? Do you believe He died on a cross to take away your sins? Do you believe on the third day God raised Him from the dead?” “Yes, yes, yes,” were his sure answers, and I dipped him beneath the waters, “in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

After applause, hugs, and well wishes, the crowd began to disperse back into the village — except for the children. Colt, the biggest kid of all, along with Esther, Daniel, and Josh (the soccer Fosters!), and the village kids started playing soccer on a level, sandy place beside the river, using four sticks for goalposts.

There was a lot of action and laughter amid shouts of joy! :):)

It began to drizzle rain after 20 minutes, but the game continued at Dario’s suggestion and delight. “I enjoy it,” he said. Also, “It’s important.”

Pastor Dario pointed to the river and Jasmine during the soccer game, meditating or praying on a large rock by the water’s edge. “That’s beautiful!” he said. I thought so too! :-)

After the game, I gave Colt some candy and toy cars from my backpack, which he and the team handed to the children as they left. It was a beautiful experience and an end to a perfect day! Thank you, Lord!

We returned to the mission house and had dinner with the pastors. We then retired to our quarters to play games, journal, share stories, and unwind peacefully from another glorious day.

I should mention that Scott went into town during the morning with Leo to get the electrical supplies he needed to complete his repairs. It was a good

fellowship and discipleship time between them. It was a great time for Scott to experience the local culture and compare shopping for such items on the local economy compared to the USA.

Everyone was in bed by about 10:30 PM except me, who felt the compulsion to record some of these experiences and impressions before they grew dim. (And probably our girls, who apparently talked far into the night every night. :))Thank you, Lord, for a great day. Good night Father. Shalom.

March 22, Wednesday, 5:45 AM. Up for our last ministry day in Olanchito.

At 6:30 AM, Tim shared and led the team devotional time from John chapter five. "We have the same knowledge of the Bible perhaps that the religious did in Jesus' day," said Tim. "The Son gives life to whom He will." Jesus said and also said, "God is my Father. Do not marvel at this." We have three witnesses (as the Mosaic law requires): (1) John the Baptist, (2) Miracles, signs, and wonders, and (3) God Himself.

Tim said verse 38 tells us, "You do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him Whom He sent."

Then, "How can you believe if you seek your own glory?" It's almost the same as, "If you don't forgive, you won't be forgiven." Tim's point was, "Don't seek your own glory, or you don't really believe and know Him." It's a hard saying, but an insightful reality and truth from the mouth of Messiah.

After breakfast, we got on the bus and went into Olanchito. We visited the mayor's office at 9 AM and were greeted and hosted by his assistant for tax collection and the Director of human resources. Both were gracious, welcoming, and happy to greet us for the new mayor who was elsewhere at the moment.

We sat in the mayor's spacious office and filled the large, beautiful table. We heard they were Christians, focused on doing justice, and serving the people. The new mayor also said he would never turn away anyone or any organization who came in the name of the Lord.

We sang a couple of songs for them (10,000 Reasons and Amazing Grace in English). Then Kevin prayed a prayer of blessing and help for the new mayor, his new administration, and the people of Olanchito.

Previously I greeted the officials and introduced ourselves as being from Harvest Community Church, and that the Spirit had led us there. I mentioned we had been a part of Pastor Dario's church for a few years, but this was the first time for this Arkansas group to visit and the rest of the team to visit Honduras. I thanked them for their hospitality in receiving us, and for their warm-hearted welcome.

After our meeting, we were led by one of the mayor's staff to the city museum for a complimentary tour and then around the city square and side streets to some points of interest. On the way we met the mayor himself, and he greeted us, and welcomed us to pray for him in person.

After this history and town tour, we took an ice cream, coffee, and pastry break at a lovely shop on the square, looking at the old, historical church. Fun, joy, and rest are integral parts of serving the King!!!

We moved to the center of the town square — a nice park with fountains and trees — where Kerlin played some worship music, and we sang some songs. Marilyn and Dwayne asked three girls nearby if they would like to join us. Two sisters and their friend, Elsie, accepted our invitation. When I asked if they were Christians, Elsie shook her head no. The others said something like, "We attend church sometimes."

Haley read them a Scripture that came to her mind (Romans 8: 37-39). We sang a couple more songs. Then we asked if we could pray for them. They said yes, and many of the team members crowded around them and did so.

After eating our sandwich lunches in the park and our street evangelism time, we boarded the bus for the village of Trocaire for children's ministry in a local church.

We arrived about 2 PM and got into full swing about 2:30 PM to 4:00 PM. All the little kids gathered almost immediately around Esther, who had them engaged and playing games until the meeting started. She was like a little children magnet for the team as Kevin later pointed out.

Tim and Lindsay introduced their family and spoke to the church in Spanish. Jasmine gave the team introduction in English, translated into Spanish by Kerlin. Taylor and Haley lead the children in groups of 2 to 3 in a lively telling of the fruits of the spirit from Galatians 5:22-23, in song. It was beautiful to behold, and the parents of the little ones seemed to enjoy it mightily.

As we left, the team members distributed candy, toy cars, rubber dinosaurs, soap bubbles, and toothbrushes with toothpaste to the children and parents as gifts. It was a happy, jubilant time led by our youth from start to finish! :-) Thank you, Lord!

We headed back to the mission house where Colt and his crew worked until dark in light rain to finish the kitchen roof over the watchman house. Scott worked to complete the wiring and electrical work on the same building.

Pastor Dario, his wife Dora, her two visiting sisters, and Martha joined us for this delicious meal — a last supper. Warm and sincere relationships were forged during this week, so it was a happy and sad time of celebration before our departure.

After our guests left the mission house, the adults milled around the room, basking in the afterglow of what we had seen done throughout the week. We missed the youth and found them in the yard in front of the mission house, singing, worshiping, and looking at the stars in the dark jungle night. We left them in peace, impressed with their actions and spiritual activity.

Soon Taylor appeared in the mission house and asked if we could do the Lord's supper in the darkness where they were worshiping.

I already had it on my mind, so I asked her to give us 10 minutes. We gathered the elements, and I found a guide I put together last year. Then we headed outside. In the darkness, aided by Jasmine and my phone flashlight, we celebrated the Eucharist — a memorial to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord. It was a holy, still, worshipful moment I think none will soon forget.

The adults filtered back inside while the youth lingered and worshiped beneath the jungle sky. Before too long, all came in to pack, prepare for bed, and sleep.

What a beautiful last day of fellowship, adventure, and ministry!! We just followed the Spirit as He led in paths of peace and power. Amen.

From the halls of government to the hearts of the people and children — the power of Jesus' words were proclaimed and felt by all. Thank You, Lord, for your indescribable gift — Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews. Amen.

Also, after our last dinner, HCC team members slipped into Dwayne and Kevin's room, a few at a time, to add their love offerings to the money already set aside for the Honduras team (Gio, Marilyn, Kerlin, Pastor Dario, Leo, Martha, and Will our driver). These gifts were presented to them in sealed envelopes minutes later as most left us, with hugs, to go back into town to their homes. Pastor Dario was made aware and said, "the gift amounts were appropriate" and "very generous."

Besides sowing into the lives of these dear and precious Honduran brothers and sisters, a summary of our monetary giving would include: [1] \$500 for the pastor's conference, food, and transportation from Covenant Life Fellowship in West Monore, LA [2] Three beautiful and treasured guitars for the pastors and kingdom worship leaders in Honduras from the CLF family also, [3] All the teaching materials in English and Spanish with ink pens and workbooks for the pastor's conference from the CLF family [4] \$700 sent ahead for plumbing and electrical repair on the mission house and lumber for the Watchman house by HCC, and [5] money for our room and board and cook at the mission house which supports more missions to Honduras and furthers the Kingdom of God in Honduras. May the Lord use it, bless it, and cause His work and word to advance and increase in that place and their lives. Amen.

March 23, Thursday, 5:30 AM, up to get ready and enjoy breakfast at 6:30 AM to depart for Tela, our rest stop on the way back to the airport, at 7 AM.

As was always the case, the team was disciplined, packed up, and ready to roll at the appointed time. Pastor Dario, Dora, and Martha percolated among the group with individual hugs and goodbyes before we boarded the bus and headed north towards our rest and relaxation stop.

We were still basking in our experiences, quietly visiting and talking among ourselves, enjoying the camaraderie, and remembering or savoring shared experiences. The four-hour bus ride to the seaside village of Tela seemed relatively short, with one rest stop and one souvenir stop. We arrived at the seaside resort at about 12:30 PM and enjoyed lunch together before checking into our rooms 2x2 and heading to the beach to lounge or swim in the waters of the Caribbean. It was breezy, the red flags were out on the beach, and the surf was up a bit, but several of our number braved the waves, and all enjoyed the peaceful rest by the sea.

We met outside the restaurant around a long table at 6:30 PM before dinner at 7 PM and shared at least one of our most defining moments of the trip. This was recorded on Dwayne's phone and shared with the team. It was a moving, satisfying time of remembrance and joy. I think the team was, and still is, in awe of what we experienced in four or five days of ministry, discipleship, and relationship — devoting ourselves and a few days to the Lord.

After a restful, delicious, and peaceful dinner, some team members went to their rooms to journal or sleep. It's rumored that a fair number of the team went to the swimming pool to play volleyball. But due to the lack of a volleyball, they were drawn into some bizarre karaoke?!

March 24, Friday, Tela, Honduras, Like disciplined and dependable guerrilla warriors, the team showed up at 6:30 AM for our morning devotional led by Annie.

There was a beautiful anticipation as the team gathered to hear from this quiet one. :) Annie read 1 John 5:1-4, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him...." These are beautiful echoes of "There is still room" (in Father's house at the Father's table, Luke 14:22). She quoted the great commandment, "To love the Lord with all our heart, mind, and strength..." and love our neighbor as ourselves.

She then went back to 1 John 5 and verses 18-21. The whole world lies in the power of the evil one, but we do not. Jesus has given us an understanding of Who He is: "This is the true God and eternal life." We should and must keep ourselves from idols.

It was a great word and sparked a lot of deep thought and discussion.

Vinson led us in "My Song of Ascent." And we recalled we would praise Him on the mountains, and when the mountains were in our way... this One we call, "Good Shepherd." Amen.

At 7:05 AM, we enjoyed breakfast together and departed for the airport at 8 AM. Everyone was prepared and right on time. After the routine passport check, Will started us rolling towards San Pedro Sula and our flights home, through ATL (Atlanta) and to MCI (Kansas City), where Bruce Morgan dropped us off a week earlier and would pick us up for the late night/early morning trip back to our

NWA homes (arriving at 2:30 AM in the Harvest Church parking lot Saturday morning). Our bodies were undoubtedly tired, but our spirits were energized, rested, and full — having peacefully experienced our Lord and His Spirit among us and in another culture. Amen.

This is from my journal that last day:

The trip to the airport from Tela Mar went smoothly, with one stop for restrooms and snacks.

We arrived at San Pedro Sula at 10 AM. Kevin headed to the MotoTel with Will, staying behind for a meeting with an indigenous pastor from Guatemala before returning home. We headed inside to check in, get our boarding passes, and check two bags. One bag contained our team items for the trip home that couldn't go into carry-on bags, and the other never made it to Olanchito.

Strangely we didn't need this bag because we had just the right amount of candy in the other bags we checked for the mission. Delta checked it back home free of charge, and the contents could be used to pack Easter eggs for the HCC Saturday celebration in Gulley Park! :):)

I sent a prayer update to Kim and the prayer team and a note to Bruce that we were about to depart Honduras on our way to meet him in Kansas City.

Thank You, Lord, for a smooth and safe passage. Amen.

I praised the team for being engaged, every one of them, and being on time and where they were supposed to be the whole trip. I don't think I heard a single complaint or complainer.

I told them, "I knew you were the A-Team when you committed to the trip. But it's one thing to say that then, and a completely different thing to say it at the end of the trip. I'm very proud of all of you, and each one of you!"

Father, I pray for safe, restful conduct for Bruce and our team to our homes tonight. Amen. A prayer...

Back to the Beginning

March 17, 2023, Fayetteville and NWA, Departure day for Harvest Community Church's first mission trip. Our destination is Olanchito, Honduras, by way of Kansas City, MO.

As you know, this mission report hasn't been exhaustive, but I've tried to hit the highlights as I know them and the incredible grace the Holy One poured on our team.

In that vein, I recall three graces I must mention, not noted above—Delta Airlines tickets out of MCI, toothbrushes, and an angel in Honduras customs.

Travel Grace

I must also include Brandon Davis, Kevin and Hilary McCasland, Bruce Morgan, and Potter's House in that mix of "Grace Attacks," (as I call them) — for getting us on our way to Kansas City and bringing us back.

We learned in this first Harvest mission experience that spring break is a terrible time to travel as far as ticket prices and availability are concerned. But we are a collegian church, and that's usually when we must adventure. So in the future, armed with this knowledge, we'll secure our tickets much earlier. In this lurch, Brandon Davis stepped up, thought outside the box, and found us reasonable ticket prices out of MCI on Delta after flights had filled up and prices had risen to almost unacceptable levels from TUL and XNA. Thank you, Lord! And thank you, Brandon!

Getting the team that distance and back in a reasonable and cost-efficient fashion could be a problem. Kevin and Hilary stepped in with the Potter's House van as a possibility, and it worked beautifully. Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Kevin and Hilary, and Potter's House.

We needed a driver to take us to Kansas City and retrieve us at the end of our trip, and Bruce Morgan volunteered the first time he heard of the need. He insisted on doing this, and at his own expense. Another beautiful grace attack and one greatly appreciated! He was already on the Potters House driving list and took care of everything. Thank you, Bruce and Vicky. Thank you, Lord.

Toothpaste and Toothbrushes

I awakened Thursday morning before our Friday departure, wondering what kind of little gift we might take to the prisoners in the Olanchito prison. We had taken some toothbrushes and toothpaste in times past. It didn't seem right to go empty-handed, but I wasn't sure what could be done on such short notice. I

attend a Bible study on Romans at Fayetteville Fellowship Church early Thursday mornings. One of our teachers is Hank Matthews, a dentist. When I turned in an assignment to him by email, I included a PS on a lark, "Would you be interested in donating some toothpaste and toothbrushes from your practice to a mission trip going to Honduras?" I thought it was improbable due to the timing, but I followed the impression to ask. Hank responded the next day, early on Friday, the day we left, that he just saw the email and was in Arizona on vacation with his family. But he said, "I'll donate \$250. Just go to Walmart or Dollar General and buy what you can." Wow! Grace attack!

But it's Friday morning, and I am packing and taking care of some last-minute items for the trip. So I called my friends Scott & Katherine Weston and asked if they might be up for a mission to shop for toothpaste, toothbrushes, and maybe a couple of used luggage pieces from thrift stores to accommodate the toothpaste, toothbrushes, as well as, a little more candy and supplies of the team. They jumped into action, purchased the items, drove them to the HCC parking lot just before we loaded and departed. Wow! Grace attack! Thank you, Dr. Matthews! Thank you, Scott & Katherine Weston! Thank you, Lord! And the whole prison population of Olanchito thanks you! Some of the extras of these products went to pastors, their families, and village children as well. You can't make these things up! :):)

A Honduran Angel in Customs

The other grace book end of the trip, besides the prison visit in Olanchito for me, was what happened in Honduras customs.

Through a little series of curious events that started with our lost bag in San Pedro Sula, we were detained in customs and told we had to pay taxes on the guitars we took to bless pastors in the villages. Lindsay and I were detained for almost 2 hours while the rest of the team waited in the terminal for us. We had never had to pay duty on these items during my previous trips. So I raised the issue with the customs agent and tried to get an audience with a supervisor who could not be found. Even though I was protesting the unjust taxes, we were mainly trying to find out how much it would be, without much success. The team was waiting, and we had a 5-6 hour drive to the mission house. So I was willing to pay them.

I won't try to describe the two-hour wait and questioning. But I must tell you what happened at the very end. A well-dressed, charming, beautiful Honduran lady entered the room, maybe in her mid-50s. From what was happening, she

ascertained that we were a short-term mission team coming to help her country. In pleasant but direct and firm Spanish, she told the young customs agent this was wrong. We were coming to help Honduras, and there should be no tax on such things. It was like an elder disciplining a younger Honduran. Then she did something completely unexpected and most graceful!

She asked in Spanish how much the duty would be. We had asked this in Spanish several times but never could get an answer. The young customs agent told her \$67. The gracious lady pulled out a \$100 bill, laid it on the table, and said, "They are not paying this. I am."

I thanked her immediately for the gracious gesture and tried to insist that we pay it instead. But she would hear nothing of it! Looking intently at the young customs agent awaiting her change, she turned and gave each of us, Lindsay and myself, a big hug. And she thanked us for coming to her country and being on a mission adventure. Wow! I've traveled a lot and have never seen anything like this, nor expected to see it. God is gracious, and He is good. He has angels of light everywhere. May God bless her and her family forever. Amen.

We were on our way with a Grace story for the books and the ages!

Now out of customs, we boarded the bus, changed some money, and started our drive with bags of warm Wendy's chicken sandwiches, cold fries, and watered-down sodas. Life was good and about to get better! That was our last trouble, but not the last grace attack. The team voiced their appreciation for our prayer covering from Kim West and crew, while others recounted other prayer support they had enlisted or heard about.

Because of the late start and driving in the dark, the trip to the mission house took us almost eight hours. But we did have the blessing in Le Ceiba of learning from Annie's sport's app that the Hogs might pull off an upset victory over #1-seeded Kansas. We had her read us the printed play-by-play of the last minutes as they happened, and the bus erupted into calling the Hogs once we knew we had won. :):) Only two more hours of driving to go... and a tired but excited mission team that got up at 3 AM for their first flight rolled into the mission house yard before 10 PM and found their way to their beds after enjoying a delicious meal Martha had left covered on the table for us. It was going to be an adventure, and we were well underway!!

Addendum

I haven't mentioned everyone who helped made this unlikely and wildly successful mission a reality, and I can't or shouldn't. That's not the purpose of this writ. Many or most of those acts of kindness and generosity — following the Spirit's leading were simply gifts offered up to God from grateful, obedient hearts.

But I would be remiss if I didn't mention a most important element was the direction and generosity of the elders and Ben's leadership as pastor. This young church wants to follow the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20, and put the money entrusted to them where their mouth is, generously supplying needs and helping those wishing to go by providing some of the expense.

Then there were people like Lora Jones, and a host of others from the community that helped organize and orchestrate the bake sale and other fund raisers, that had the whole community of HCC providing so much encouragement, financial, and prayer support it was humbling and fun to be a part.

Lastly, from the team's perspective, I think we are in awe of how we saw the Holy Spirit lead and grace us with His unseen but felt presence from start to finish, and at every turn along the way. Jesus' name be exalted and praised.

For the team of fourteen grateful hearts,

Dwayne Bell

"Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us" (Ephesians 3:20).

"Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen" (Jude 24-25).