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Hearts of Christ Ministry: The Mission Trip that Left a Lasting Impression

In the Christian faith, God calls His people to go out and spread His word to those who do not have a relationship with Him. The power of ministry can be as simple as telling a coworker or friend about Jesus and offering them the opportunity to learn more about Christianity and the love that God can provide for them. However, God had bigger plans for me, and I was about to find out exactly what journey He was planning to send me on. In March of 2019, God called me to travel to a small country in Central America called Belize to minister to the people of Belize through a ministry that specializes in aiding the people of Belize both physically and spiritually. Throughout this essay, I will break down each day I was in this beautiful country and provide some firsthand experiences of the accomplishments and experiences my team and I had while serving the Lord.



The Call and the Preparation

Sometime in March 2019, Beulah Baptist Church, the church I attended at the time in Mohawk, TN, announced that they would be hosting a six-day mission trip to Belize in June. At first, I was unsure if I wanted to go or could physically go due to me graduating from Cocke County High School in May and attempting to prepare to attend Walters State Community College in the Fall. However, after just a few days, God laid it on my heart that I should go on this trip, and He would make sure that the rest would be taken care of. After praying about the trip and crunching the numbers for the cost of the trip (which was around twelve hundred dollars), I went to the first meeting the church held for those attending the trip. I signed my name on the list and presented the amount of money they required for us to go. I joined a team of around twelve people who ranged from teachers, carpenters, religious leaders, stay at home moms, and even students like me.

With pastor Larry Jones at the helm, we all began to prepare for this wonderful experience. Over the next couple of months, I made sure that I had everything I needed. I bought my plane tickets, purchased supplies, and packed all the belongings I needed for the weeklong trip. After checking, rechecking, and checking one last time, it was time to make the drive to Charlotte, NC to catch my flight to Belize City, Belize on Saturday June 1, 2019. This was a new experience for me, because I chose to have my mother drive me to Charlotte rather than fly from Knoxville to save money on plane tickets. Therefore, I would be going through all the security and checkpoints in Charlotte airport alone. After saying goodbye to my mother and catching a ride to



the airport from a hotel shuttle, I was ready to begin this journey. I made it through the luggage check in, security, and to my gate with no issues whatsoever. After about an hour of waiting, the rest of the mission team landed in Charlotte, and we all met at our gate. We boarded our flight to Belize City excited to see what God had in store for us once we land.



(A picture of the front of our mission compound)

Day 1: Settling in and Planning

After landing safely and being shuttled to our compound in a small village an hour West of Belize City called Roaring Creek, we unpacked our belongings and began making plans for what we wanted to accomplish during the week we had to work. After making lists and dividing the work, we came up with a game plan. Over that week, we intended to build and deliver the following:

- four water tanks
- three outhouses

- five sets of bunk beds

These items would go to needy families in the surrounding villages. On top of these things, we planned to distribute food to those we encountered and host two different bible schools for children to attend. The next step was to pick up the food and supplies we would need to feed the team, construct the items we planned to build, and the food we planned to make into bags to give out. Day one was a bit chaotic, but it was crucial for us to make sure we had a proper direction to go in. We all went to bed that night eager to hit the ground running the next day.



(A few of our team members at the church in Bullet Tree)

Day 2: The Church Service I Will Never Forget

On Sunday, June 2, the team and I attended a church service in a nearby village called Bullet Tree. The small church in the village is operated by a missionary couple from back in the United States, and they had invited us to attend one of their services. We arrived at the church

eager to experience the type of worship that the church offered. This service was unlike anything I had ever experienced before. The singing lasted for over an hour by itself, but I could barely tell any time had passed. It had a way of drawing you into the songs and making the rest of the world disappear. The songs were mostly in Spanish, which is the primary language spoken in that village. It was somewhat odd, because I do not know any Spanish whatsoever, but it felt like I could understand what the song was saying even with it being in another language. The preacher of the church had asked pastor Larry Jones, who was our team leader, to preach this service. Not only did he have the daunting task of preaching to an entirely new and different group of people, but he also had to use a translator so that the people would understand what he was saying. After listening to the service for over an hour, I left that church in a completely new mindset. The message that pastor Larry preached to the congregation talked about the love that God shows to His people and the grace that he provides us each day. That service was one of the best religious experiences I had ever been a part of. Even with the use of a translator and the language barrier with the songs, I had never felt the Holy Spirit in a church service like that before. This service motivated the team even more to really draw close to God and do our utmost best to carry out what He had in store for us.



(Our shop where we built all of our items)

Day 3: Channeling Our Inner Bob the Builder

With the inspirational and moving church service fueling us, we all hit the ground running on the third day. Much of this day was spent constructing outhouses and the water tank frames we planned to provide for families in need. I have never been much of a carpenter, but I was willing to give it my best shot. The three outhouses were the most complex thing the team and I had to construct, so we began with them. The design of these outhouses was simple. Each one was made up of four walls that were made of slats for ventilation and a single floor piece that had a hole cut in it. Each outhouse was around six feet tall when assembled, and they were extremely heavy. Therefore, we all decided that we would build each part of the outhouse at our workshop and assemble them once we delivered them. We managed to build all three of the outhouses by the end of the third day. While most of the men from our team helped with the construction, the



women began to make the food bags we planned to distribute. Each bag would have lard, rice, and beans that would feed a family of four for about a week. These three items were all staples in the diets of the people of Belize, and they seemed to be the easiest thing to distribute that would last. Each item was packaged into portions and placed inside a water-resistant sack. By the time that our third day came to an end, the hard-working ladies had completed making over one hundred and fifty bags to give out when we ventured out into the villages.



(Some of the team and I with one of the water tanks we installed)

Day 4: Water Tanks and Bible School

With the hardest item we planned to build completed, we moved on to building the frames for water tanks. The frames we planned to build would hold a two-hundred-gallon rubber tank that was meant to catch rainwater off buildings. These tanks used a guttering system to direct the water into a pipe attached to the side of the building that contained strainers and filters to catch debris. Then, the water would collect in the tank and be accessible from a spout at the bottom. While this may not seem like the best option for an item to give to a family, unpolluted water is very rare in the part of Belize we were in due to pollution and inaccessible terrain. The climate of Belize is tropical, and they receive large amounts of rain almost daily. Therefore, the tank would be an asset to a family. After building the first frame, the other three water tank frames came together quickly. This left us time to precut the bunk beds and their slats. These were also meant to be assembled on sight, so there was not much for us to do at this point. After finishing up our construction project, we all headed back to the church in Bullet Tree village for

the bible school we planned to host. Not long after we arrived, dozens of kids began to flood the church, and we realized that this was going to be an amazing experience for both us and the children. This bible school was meant to be a fun opportunity for us to spread God's word to these children. With a presentation, games, and refreshments, we saw two children accept Christ as their savior. This made all



the planning and effort worthwhile. After all, our mission was to spread God's word and lead the lost to salvation. This was a great start to our ministry for the week, but we were just getting started.



(A trailerful of bunk beds, water tanks, and an outhouse)

Day 5: Call us UPS Cause We Out Delivering

The dawning of a new day allowed us to venture out into the villages to deliver our items and food bags. With the help of our contact in Belize, the families had already been selected to receive the items we had spent the past two days building. Over the course of this day, we ventured to the villages of Valley of Peace, Los Floras, and Buena Vista. In these three villages, we installed two outhouses, three water tanks, and three bunk bed sets. Each family also received a food bag and a bible in either Spanish or French depending on which language they spoke. We also managed to give out all the food bags we had taken with us. This was a successful day due to the amount of people we were able to help and witness to in the name of God. This day seemed to fly by due to the fast pace we all moved in. After a long but rewarding day of making

our way through the jungle back country, we decided to swing by the mission compound to pick up a few more bags of food to take to a place North of our location simply called "The Dump." The Dump was exactly what it sounded like. It was a large area off an unnamed dirt road that spanned several acres, and every inch of this place was covered with trash.

Much of the trash was constantly on fire as well to help reduce the amount of garbage that was accumulating there. The worst part of this hellish

place is that many people call it home. Amid this fiery, smokey, and rancid smelling place were makeshift shelters that the homeless had constructed. This experience was heartbreaking and eye opening. While we had already seen prime examples of poverty, this was a whole new level of



depression. Seeing someone lying on a row of garbage bags underneath a half-melted tarp that was being held up by sticks made me realize how blessed and spoiled I was. Things such as a car, electricity, and a warm meal that I take for granted each day are seemingly unobtainable for these people. We went through The Dump and gave out what food we had and prayed with these poor people. While I expected them to be hostile and bitter due to their conditions, they were some of the nicest and friendliest people I have ever met. They showed exceptional gratitude for what we gave them, but they displayed great faith by verbally thanking God for sending us to them. This part of the trip was the most eye opening and impactful moment for me, and it left a lasting impression on my life. The sight of those people in that awful place will forever make me grateful for everything I have in life, and it also made me realize how much God has blessed me in my own life.



(One of the final water tanks we installed)

Day 6: Wrapping Up Our Mission

Day six would be our last day for ministry, and we had a few more things left to do. We returned to Los Floras to deliver the remaining water tank and bunk bed sets. We also took the opportunity to distribute the last of our food that we had prepared to a section of the village we had not previously visited. Once again, the people we encountered were some of the most joyful individuals. Even when they had little, they saw their wealth through their faith. They all treated the food bags we gave them as treasures and thanked us several times for being a vessel for God's works. After leaving the village, we made one final stop at a residence right down the road from our compound. This family was to receive the final outhouse we built. We had some difficulties getting the now built outhouse to sit level over the waste hole they had dug, but we all came together as a team and figured the issues out. That afternoon, we planned to host another Bible School in a small church not far from us. The lady who owned the building allowed us to use her establishment to host the bible school. Like the last one, dozens of kids flocked to us after getting out of school. We all played and talked with the children, and then presented them with our lesson. There was one young man that was saved at this bible school, and we all felt that this week of ministry ended on a high note. We all went to bed that night exhausted but with full hearts. We accomplished so much over the past few days, and it was bittersweet to see the mission work come to an end.



In conclusion, the Hearts of Christ ministry that I was blessed to be a part of was an amazing and life changing experience. Over the course of a week, I was able to laugh, cry, and

worship with some of the most amazing individuals I met on this trip. Through the items we built and the food we distributed; God worked through everyone on our mission team. We were able to help so many people both physically and spiritually. While I was supposed to be the one who provided a source of happiness and change in these people's lives, the people I encountered touched my life in so many ways. They all showed me how strong their faith was in God and how they could still be joyful and happy even when they lived in poverty. This entire experience will last forever in my memories, and I will never forget the feelings and emotions that came about while I was following God's will on this mission trip to Belize.