



## Holden Newsletter-October 2016

We hope the following highlights will help you find and read what interests you!

**Main Topics**

**Main Points**

**Praises/Requests**

**Dear Friend, Encourager, Partner-in-Mission,**

### **NOT QUITE PARADISE**

**Our vacation was a time of both restoration and challenge.** We spent 8 days and 7 nights on the coast of Ecuador desiring to celebrate our 30th year of marriage on a quiet beach, away from the city, noise, and crowds of people. The resort, recommended by other missionaries, was located at the end of a beach, in a small town, and the prices were exceptionally reasonable. All during the week we slept, ate delicious seafood, relaxed in hammocks, walked the beach, waded in the ocean, watched crabs, collected seashells, drank fresh tropical juices, listened to the ocean waves, and watched the palm trees sway, spending quality time with each other and God in His creation!

But in the midst of this 'heaven-on-earth' is the reality that on earth nothing is perfect. **On the second day of our vacation, we were walking the beach enroute to a beachside restaurant when two young men robbed us.** They had been waiting for us to leave the resort, followed us, bypassed us, and then aggressively approached me (Sondra) demanding money. When I told them I had none (which was true) they tried to grab my purse. Because they could not get my purse, which was across my body diagonally, they pushed me down onto the hard and wet sand. **Stunned by the fall, they were able to pull my purse from me. In it was our camera which we use for ministry - SORRY, NO PHOTOS THIS MONTH !**

They then ran up the "evacuation route" from the beach and left town to sell the camera. We immediately walked to a pizza place where we had eaten the day before. The owner (named 'Pastor') took us in, gave us water, called the police from the neighboring community and then rode around town with us in the squad car inquiring about the two youth. We had been able to describe them plus Pastor's nephew saw them running with my purse and told the police they were "local marijuana-users and thieves".

The police officer, Jose, was extremely helpful. For the rest of the week, Jose drove up and down the beach 2-3 times daily patrolling the area often stopping to visit with us. They also brought out the Arms Patrol vehicle twice during that week (which patrols the coast for boats entering within Ecuador's borders with drugs and weapons). We later found out that this small village, which historically had been relatively safe, now, because of the economic crisis no longer has a local police force and the incidence of crime has risen.

The owners of the resort attended to my sore body offering analgesic creams, etc. for which we were very grateful. Many of the other locals we met throughout the week were very helpful and sympathetic (the news spread fast because it's such a small town.) When we returned to Quito Darrell took me to the doctor. I have been and will continue to receive physical therapy for a total of 10 weeks (my hip, shoulder, and lower back were hurting quite a bit but are near completely healed now.)

**The beaches of Ecuador, like many other similar locations, are often described as a "paradise." But in reality, only heaven will fulfill this promise to those of us seeking a perfect place of beauty, tranquility, and safety. We praise God for His protection from further injury, for the friendly people who helped us, for healing, and for the opportunity to pray regularly for these two young men.**

## **A SEASON OF RESTORATION**

**It's amazing how the Lord always knows what we need - even before we do!** With the exception of one other vacation that we were blessed with in 2012, our time on the coast was only the second time in about 14 years that we had purposely set aside significant time for the restoration of our souls. **Thinking that the eight days on the coast were sufficient, we were not planning additional getaways any time soon. But Our Lord had other plans.** Immediately following our vacation, Reach Beyond was offering a spiritual retreat for the ladies. I told Darrell that I could not justify attending, especially after the money that was spent just the week before, but an anonymous donor decided to pay for 50% of the cost of the retreat for every woman attending. So I found myself in the community of Ban~os for the weekend, staying in a nice hotel with amazing meals, a swimming pool, a spa and waterfall nearby! Ironically the topic for the weekend was 'guilt' and shame' and before the weekend was over, I was completely free of every ounce of guilt I had come there with, thinking I didn't deserve to be enjoying something like this so soon. When we had returned from the coast, I didn't think I could be more relaxed. Boy was I wrong! After my time in Ban~os, **I came to realize that our vacation had only worked through the first few layers of tiredness and stress that had accumulated.**

**In addition to places of relaxation, the Lord has been recently showing us how to incorporate times of restoration in our lives daily.** There are many resources available to us for missionary care; including several great books. I recently found "Embracing Soul Care" on a bookshelf of our mission. I have been reading, re-reading, and taking valuable notes from it for weeks. The author explains the soul as being "who we really are inside" and teaches the value and purpose for taking care of oneself before taking care of others. The Bible says that we are to love our neighbors AS ourselves, not MORE THAN ourselves. **We have been told, and have seen firsthand, the physical and emotional exhaustion and burnout in the lives of various missionaries and ministry leaders. Therefore, it is our desire to follow Jesus' example of "getting away to be with the Father", so that, with His help, we will not be another statistic on the mission field. We recently have been informed that our mission's plan is for us to serve here for an indefinite amount of time. Praise God! So, we wish to serve healthily!**

## **CHANGES WITHIN THE FAMILY**

Our oldest son, Colin, age 43, has been dating the same woman for the past 10 years. There had been talk about moving in together or marrying one day soon. But, recently, for various reasons, this relationship ended and he has met another woman. **Colin and Shen began dating this past March and on Oct 7<sup>th</sup> were married,** with no guests present, in a local courthouse in Minneapolis. We had dreams of one day attending our son's wedding and becoming grandparents, excited over the possibility of Colin and Lisa having a baby. But our desires are often not the same of the Lord's. Instead, **we are now grandparents-of-sorts to Shen's 15-year-old son! We have never met Shen and her son and ask you to pray that one day we will have the opportunity to not only meet our daughter-in-law and her son but to rejoice in a restored relationship with our own son.**

## **WHEN DOES A HOUSE BECOME A 'HOME' ?**

**We've been here more than two years now. Much of life, especially within our house and our surrounding neighborhood, 'happens' with a daily rhythm. Mission life, outside this parameter varies from day to day and often presents the "unexpected". But when we return "home" at the end of the day, there is security and comfort knowing that we live where we do and that we live near those with whom we have relationships.** We have been blessed to live in a secure, clean, well-kept residence and to have a lovely landlady. **We've also been blessed with being able to furnish our home with a combination of second-hand furniture other missionaries have either sold to us or loaned to us.** Our living room set is the only 'new' furniture we have. Even the bed we sleep on is borrowed.

Early last year, a missionary loaned us several pieces of furniture because she was temporarily moving to Spain to decide whether if she would like to live there permanently. But recently, she has decided not to and will move back into her home near Quito, within the next year, which she has been renting to another family in her absence. So, we recently began investigating what new furniture is affordable and available in Quito. Little by little, we need to find and purchase one or more pieces at a time so that when she ready to move we will not be without a bed, kitchen table/chairs, a bookcase, a wall unit, shelves and end tables. **In late October, we bought a new mattress, bed pillows, and a wall-unit.** We were blessed to find these close to home, purchase them with a \$60 discount, and find alternative delivery (instead of having the store deliver and install the wall-unit for \$80, we hired a guy with a pick-up for \$20 and Darrell installed it himself)! **We hope that, one day, we will have all of our own furnishings, but for now we are happy to be sleeping, in comfort, on our own new mattress! We thank Our Lord that poco a poco (little-by-little) our house is becoming our 'home' and that He has, is, and will continue to, provide what ever we need.**

### **LANGUAGE LIMITATIONS AND TOUGH QUESTIONS**

**It certainly was not our plan to study the Bible, with others, in Spanish, in our home any time soon because of our limitations within the Spanish language, but our two friends Patricio and Rosita asked if they could meet with us regularly to “discuss things of the Bible.” So for the past few months they have been coming to our home approximately two to three evenings each month.**

Rosita, a practicing Catholic, has read her Bible off and on for a few years, but mainly focused on the Psalms because she said she “struggled to understand any of the other books.” So in 2011, while in Ecuador, Sondra gave her a New International Version Bible in Spanish. Since then, Rosita has been regularly reading her Bible. Patricio, her husband, says he is “Catholic because my parents were Catholic” and does not regularly participate in the Catholic practices.

**In 2011, when Patricio was unjustly imprisoned for a crime he didn't commit Darrell accompanied Rosita to the visit her husband at the federal prison and gave Patricio a NIV Bible in Spanish. It was then that Patricio began reading the Bible daily. Recently, with tears in his eyes, he shared with us that “this book is what held me together in that ugly place”.**

**Today, although he has not memorized Scripture, Patricio can now refer to several verses and tell others in which book of the Bible they are located. But this is not enough for Patricio; he has expressed a deep desire to know more about God's Word and has many questions.** Some of those questions we've been able to answer or to direct him to other scripture to find the answers, but there are many questions we cannot find the right Spanish words to help him with. **So, Darrell, spoke with an indigenous pastor, Pastor Luis, the producer of the HCJB Radio Quichua programming, and asked if he would be willing to meet with Patricio at our home to which he happily agreed.** Patricio and Rosita are indigenous (native Indians). Although they speak Spanish and do not speak Quichua, their parents and grandparents did. The indigenous have very strong ties with God's creation and desire to keep much of their traditions and culture. **Pastor Luis, also indigenous, knows how to present the things of the Bible and answer questions with a respect and understanding of their indigenous ways.**

**We weren't sure how Patricio would respond to this idea, nor Rosita, because right from the beginning, they expressed to us their concern about others trying to “change their religion.”** We've assured them that God is not interested in their (nor our) religion, but that he is more interested in having an intimate relationship with those whom He has created. **We've told them that it is not our place to judge their religion nor the things of their culture, but it is the Holy Spirit's job to work in their hearts to show them what is and isn't in agreement with God's Word.**

**We hope to arrange this meeting with them on Monday, December 12. Please being praying with us that the Holy Spirit would be present and that much fruit would come from this meeting!**

**PRAISES:**

- For safety, recovery, and restoration from life's recent challenges
- For the use of borrowed furniture for the past 1 ½ years

**PRAYER REQUESTS:**

- For restoration in our relationship with our oldest son
- For the opportunity to one day meet his wife and her son
- For the Holy Spirit to work powerfully in Patricio and Rosita's lives



**Darrell and Sondra Holden**

**Ripe For Harvest Missionaries - Partnering with Reach Beyond - Ecuador, S.A.**



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