

Mission Trip Mar. 2011 Sara Hoy



"While I was there, my heart embraced these kids and wanted to know more about their stories." Sara Hoy

I remember having a conversation with a friend a few years ago telling her that I didn't think God was 'calling' me to ever go on a mission's trip outside of the US. Over the last year and a half, God has changed my heart – as I hope He continues to do so for the rest of my life. After some life-changes and hearing stories from family and friends, He has drawn my heart to orphans and to hopefully adopt someday. This year I have been challenged to face many of my fears – going on a mission's trip was one of those fears. As I was praying about it and setting some goals at the beginning of 2011, I wrote down to eventually go on a mission trip, thinking

that it wouldn't happen until the end of the year or the following year. The next day I opened an email that included a paragraph about extended deadline for an upcoming Missions trip to the Dominican Republic. I read through the entire

packet of information and laughed at myself for considering going on a trip that I would have to make a decision within 3 days. As I continued to think about it and all the excuses I could come up with, it was made very clear to me that I was going. What made it even more so apparent to me was the amount of peace I had about going! So I said yes and planned accordingly over the next two months to embark on my first mission's trip.

Since coming back, I have tried to sit and write down my thoughts about my recent trip to the Dominican Republic and found myself unable to capture the words to describe all that had happened in one short week. Now that I have had some time to verbally process and look at how this has changed me, my perspective, my thoughts and my world... I see how selfish I am even looking at this experience. The last thing I wanted to do was approach this trip with a consumer mentality and I find myself questioning what I got out of it... what I would gain from this trip... etc. I want to look through God's eyes and see how He will use me and change me – from His perspective, not my own.

A good friend has described taking a trip like this is like traveling to Narnia from the books "The Chronicles of Narnia" by C.S. Lewis. No one else understands your experience unless they had gone with you or had experienced it themselves and you come back to the world as you had left it, but you are changed - the world you once knew as 'normal' looks different. I didn't know what that was like until I had walked through those doors myself. Those doors include traveling to an unknown place, going on a mission's trip, seeing and experiencing things I have only seen in pictures, videos, TV and heard from others – I found that fear held me back from doing this and I faced it head on. I've come to realize how much I have allowed that fear to keep me from doing things and I no longer want that to be true. I don't want to live in fear anymore; I don't want to allow it to control me.

This year I have been challenged with 'being present' with where I am and what I am doing. I recently attended a leadership conference and something someone said really struck me: "to be willing to go... and willing to stay... to be fully present..." This was even more so evident and clear for me while I was in the D.R. I had no cell phone distractions, I was able to have deep, meaningful conversations, and I wasn't consumed with thinking of what was next and where I was going and who I was going to be with... I was present. I wasn't distracted with everything I am distracted with at home. While I was there, my heart embraced these kids and wanted to know more about their stories. As I learned more, my heart broke for what they have already experienced in their lives and the roads that were ahead of them – hopeful for bright futures for them. After returning I kept asking myself, "What am I supposed to do with this? How am I to respond?" After talking with a friend and processing and sharing the trip with her, I was able to finally put some of

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this into some action steps. I couldn't see how the theme of being present with where I am was compatible with how my heart hurt for these kids when I could only be with them for no longer than one week... but, my friend pointed out to me that the same thing is happening here too. It's right in our own back yard, our neighborhoods, our community... and she was right. There are kids and families hurting and their situations may not be in the D.R., but could be similar. So, I am here and I can make a difference in a kid's life... even if it's just one. I can give of my time, be a positive role model, and love them wherever they are. I have put my reaction into some action steps recently and have started the process of becoming a Big Sister within the *Big Brothers Big Sisters* program with the Youth Service Bureau. God has expanded my heart to love these kids in the D.R., to love kids here in our community and around the world. I pray that my vision continues to look beyond myself and continues to expand it to God's vision. The song, "Be Thou My Vision" came to mind a lot while I was there and it continues to even so today...

"Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art
Thou my best thought by day or by night
Waking or sleeping Thy presence my light
Be thou my wisdom and Thou my true word
I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord
Thou my great Father, I, Thy true son
Thou in me dwelling and I with Thee one
Riches I heed not nor man's empty praise
Thou mine inheritance now and always
Thou and thou only first in my heart
High King of heaven my treasure Thou are
High King of heaven my victory won
May I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's Sun
Heart of my own heart whatever befall
Still be my vision O Ruler of all"

I am thankful for the experience and glad that I went. I pray that God continues to shape my heart and expand my vision – beyond myself, beyond what I can see in front of me... and to love and care for others the way that He loves them.
-Sara Hoy

Mission Trip Mar. 2011 Ed Mc Cash



Thank you, Lord, for the ways you show yourself to us along this journey! – Ed Mc Cash

Needless to say, the privilege of having my whole family together on this trip has me feeling very grateful, and unsure of which of the many highlights to share; so I will pick just one.

My son Jacob and I do a fair amount of hiking through the local forests in Pennsylvania. Despite knowing where we are heading, and the basics of the route we are taking, we always like to hike on trails with "trail markers"; small brightly painted areas on the trees along our route. When we've gone too long without seeing one, we start to wonder whether we are on the right path or not.

The Christian life is often described as "a journey" that we walk with God. How long has it been since you've seen His trail markers in your life?

There were numerous times on the trip when members of our group could see His hand at work, sense His presence with us, and not be able to explain away the circumstances as mere coincidences. Midway through the week a member of the group assigned each person of the mission team several residents of the orphanage to be prayed for. The distribution was "random" - based on what seat we happened to choose that morning. Wouldn't you know; I was assigned the one young man that I had some tension with earlier in the week. I just had to laugh!

Later, at the orphanage, I was tucked away with some repairs to do on some equipment when up walked this same young man! I invited him to give me a hand with the projects, and by the time we had finished, we were fast friends, and well aware that something special had happened. Friday afternoon, and as sat in the truck at the orphanage, ready to pull away for the last time, he was among the group of guys who walked up to my window to tell me he hoped I would be back again soon.

Thank you, Lord, for the ways you show yourself to us along this journey! – Ed Mc Cash

Mission Trip Mar. 2011 Megan Porter

In June when I was there I became very good friends with a boy named Alberto. I didn't think that Alberto was going to be there when I returned in March, but when we arrived on Sunday he was there! Throughout the week I spent a lot of one on one time with him and I learned a lot about him and his family. He was so gracious and helpful with my Spanish. I'm so thankful for the deeper friendship that I was able to build with him during the week and I can't wait to spend more time on the benches under the trees at the orphanage learning more about his life. – Megan Porter



Mission Trip Mar. 2011 Beckie Romig



"I would encourage anyone seeking to hear His voice, to walk with Him more closely, or to serve Him more personally to seriously consider joining us on a trip to the Rose of Sharon Orphanage. Your heart will never be the same!" –Beckie Romig

During a church service in 1998, Dr. John Kelly shared how God had used him during a medical mission trip to the Dominican Republic. He spoke of how, in spite of equipment challenges and language and cultural barriers, he was able to provide much needed dental care to hundreds of Dominicans.

2 Corinthians 12:9 says "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me."

I decided to trust God's power and committed to serving on a construction team with Solid Rock Missions in the Dominican Republic. During that trip we were invited to accompany the local team leaders on an outreach trip to the Rose of Sharon

Orphanage; I eagerly agreed.

While conditions at the orphanage were overwhelming: poor sanitation, challenging working conditions for the staff, and children infested with lice and fungus, God's heartbeat resounded through the halls. One young autistic boy, who has since been called home to Heaven, crawled up in my arms, wrapped his arms around my neck and implanted the desire to serve "the least of these" deep in my heart.

"Once our eyes are opened we can't pretend we don't know what to do. God, who weights our hearts and keeps our souls, knows that we know, and holds us responsible to act." Proverbs 24:12

I've returned to the orphanage many times since and, while the physical conditions have improved greatly over the years as a result of the hard work of many groups, the desires of the children to be held, touched, and loved has never subsided. It has been a blessing to watch so many of the children grow and to know that, in some small way, our gifts of service, presence, and love have helped them feel the love of Jesus touching them in tangible ways.

As much as we've been able to share & bless the children, my life has been touched in even more ways. These trips have directly influenced the way I live:

- I am more patient with the many international students in our community as they try to communicate; I know how difficult it is to try to buy something at the market, travel on public transportation, or gain a specific piece of information when I simply do not know the words required to formulate the question.
- I am more grateful for the simple things in life: water, food, education and transportation are more than mere conveniences, they are true blessings: ones that most of the world's inhabitants are not able to appreciate.
- I am more aware of needs, not only around the world, but in my own community. God has enlarged my heart and expanded my sense of compassion.
- I recognize that God has shaped me for service and that His promise that He has prepared me in advance to do His work (Ephesians 2:10) is true, therefore where He calls me I will follow. This has led to my return to college, at the age of 50, to pursue a degree in nursing.

I would encourage anyone seeking to hear His voice, to walk with Him more closely, or to serve Him more personally to seriously consider joining us on a trip to the Rose of Sharon Orphanage.

Your heart will never be the same! – Beckie Romig

Mission Trip Mar. 2011 Tracy Roth



"I believe that God has called us as a church to be a presence in their lives a family that will not abandon them, a model of love that always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." –Tracy Roth

My experience in the Dominican Republic was a reminder that God uses his servants in ways that we cannot predict. He is always in our midst, working not only in this moment but also preparing the encounters and opportunities that He has for us and others in the future. His work is subtle and unerring, so quiet it can go on without our direct awareness, until we catch a glimpse and are stunned by his perfection.

He led a young girl, Sharayah, to raise money for a mission trip; though the trip was supposed to be to Africa, so she thought, she did not have sufficient funds for this destination, but could afford to support both herself and her mother on the trip to the DR. Her mother, Misty, used her professional

training in special education to give much needed instructional time, and loving attention and affection, to several of the boys at the orphanage who have delayed development and conditions that keep them from a normal classroom. God used multiple people and connections to bring joy, inclusion, and affirmation into the lives of these boys. God also provided a

team that was equipped to do what was needed for every part of our work: stand on ladders, spackle, play basketball and softball, strum a guitar, drive a truck, bake brownies, wash hair and feet, and carry suitcases of presents.

It is humbling and breath-taking to see how acts of obedience, person by person, lead to results that no one can fathom or predict. On a personal level, having visited and stayed in the DR several years before, I was eager to return. The boys who had been there before remembered me and it was good to greet them again as old friends. Even though many are

older now and have the typical teenager comportment of nonchalance and independence, I believe that it matters to them that we return. It matters that they are known, remembered, loved, and encouraged through ongoing relationships. I believe that God has called us as a church to be a presence in their lives, a family that will not abandon them.

I am eager to see how God is working even now to use simple acts of faith for his extraordinary purposes in the lives of these children and beyond. – Tracy Roth
