

Solid rock

June 30, 2011

I'm leading a Nehemiah construction team through Habitat for Humanity in the Philippines this summer. The work has been constant and challenging.

We build without any luxuries. The bricks we make weigh 40 pounds each, and it takes nearly 800 bricks to build one house. We are erecting two homes side by side. We unloaded, by hand, a semi-flatbed truck of cement bags, sand and rocks. Each bag of cement weighed 80 pounds. The bags of rocks and sand we carried on our backs weighed from 100-130 pounds. About half the time we're able to use a medium size concrete mixer. For the rest, we mix the concrete by hand. Cutting 1/4 inch rebar and bending it to form supports for the houses has also been one of our many activities. Moving piles of rocks and sand proved tiring under the hot sun, but at last, the foundations were finished.

Our ministry work seemed to follow a similar course. When we first arrived in Butuan City, we had to buy supplies, adjust to the time change, and figure out what we were doing. Even as the team leader, I was not overly informed about our activities or opportunities for ministry before we arrived.

We attempted to go into the neighborhood and engage people, but with no true success. The little children could finish the Bible verses we started, and trying to share Christ after a basketball game did not work the way I envisioned it. Our first Bible Study was nothing less than what I'd call a train wreck. It seemed we could do nothing right. All this time, I was fighting within my mind and heart, beginning to wonder if I was capable of leading this team in ministry.

We continued to fight exhaustion from long days. As much as I tried to

encourage my team with God's truth about our purpose here, my stress and anxiety continued to rise.

It was Sunday night, and I knew we had to try house-to-house again. Even if we were only going to lead one person to salvation, disciple one Christian, or just sow seeds without seeing the harvest, I knew we had to be faithful in proclaiming the word. My father had sent me a passage from Isaiah 40 that I read over our three house-to-house teams before we went out: "Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youth grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on winds like eagles, they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."

The result of our obedience? We were allowed to partake in the harvest! Three people placed their faith in Christ trusting him as Savior that night. We also found a person of peace. We will continue to study the Bible with him and his entire family until God leads him to salvation! We are now moving toward setting up consistent Bible studies with other people of peace for the hopes of salvation, and discipleship for new believers in Christ. After we all came back, rejoicing in the Lord and sharing of our different stories, we sang a song, then lifted up our hearts to God in prayer. In 1 John 1, the author writes "We write this to make your joy complete." And that night, our joy was complete and overflowing.

Now when we wake up, we have hope. The Lord shattered any doubt in my mind. He has shown his eternal faithfulness; even when my faith was about to run out. Although the beginning labor was strenuous and at times discouraging, the Lord has laid a foundation for the rest of our ministry here in this Habitat community. He is our shelter, our rock and our firm foundation here in the storm. He is our fixed foundation. In him, we shall

never be moved.

Dan Black, a student at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, is serving with a Nehemiah Team in the Philippines, in association with Habitat for Humanity.