

*Un Viaje Inolvidable (An Unforgettable Trip)*

Eighteen months ago, when I first met Dr. Nathan Williams at the beginning of my journey with cancer, he informed me about *Missions of Hope*, an outreach to Honduras. He told me stories about some of the patients he has treated at the Santa Barbara, Honduras hospital and shared with me about the children at the orphanage called **Hogar de Niños**. From that moment on, making the trip with the team to Honduras became a goal for me. I thought about it a lot, not knowing if I would ever be well enough to go, but praying every day that I also would get to serve in Honduras. God answered my prayer! This trip was one of the greatest experiences of my life! Although I hope many people were helped in some way by my presence there, I was the one who was truly blessed.

I was very fortunate to have had a wide variety of experiences while on the trip. I served with either the team at the **Hogar** or the medical team on most days, and even helped the guys on the construction team one morning. I saw first-hand the many ways our dedicated group helped the people of Santa Barbara—amazing!

On the first day, I went with Owen to speak to the women and families in the waiting rooms at the hospital. I was able to share my testimony with them and hopefully give ladies in my situation hope and courage to face the battles that lay ahead for many. This was particularly meaningful for me, because I knew the emotions that those women were dealing with and could relate to the anxiety and fear they were feeling. I shared with them how God has provided for me and continues to be my strength and hope through this illness. I pray I was a source of comfort and reassurance to them as they heard from one who has been where they are and felt what they are feeling.

I got to know a few of the women even better when I spent time with Dr. Williams in the clinic. There, I helped fit women for prosthetics, spoke with them about my experience with some of the specific things they were dealing with, and helped count out life-saving medicines for them that we brought from the U.S.; medicines that are not readily available in Honduras. I also had the opportunity to spend two days in surgery with Dr. Williams, and learned a lot about that aspect of treatment. The medical opportunities that I had on this trip were hopefully beneficial to the people I had the pleasure of interacting with, but it certainly was a wonderful experience for me. It made me **SO** appreciative of the medicine and facilities we often take for granted here in the States. Seeing women with a diagnosis similar to my own, who were unable to get medicines that are crucial to their survival, broke my heart.

As much I as enjoyed the medical side of things, it was the children of Santa Barbara who stole my heart! More than words can express, I relished building relationships and sharing Jesus with the little ones at the orphanage. I especially bonded with Erica, a nine year old little beauty with the biggest brown eyes and the sweetest personality. The morning I left, she and her roommates gave me a letter. It was written in Spanish, so I was home before I was able to translate it. In the middle of the letter they told me that even if they didn't ever see me again on earth, that it would be ok, because they knew that they would be with me in heaven one day. Wow! I shed more than a few tears when I read those words. They will forever remain in my heart. My hope is that **I DO** get to return and see them again soon.

I also interacted with students at a local high school. As a teacher, I really enjoyed getting to see first hand how the education system worked in Honduras with the similarities and differences from The U.S. Although the facilities and resources were definitely lacking compared to our schools, there were many things that I feel like we could learn from them! The students at the school and the kids at the orphanage were kind and readily expressed their appreciation even for small things. A couple of the students, as well as the English professor, have kept in touch with me since I returned. I hope to continue to build relationships with them.

I honestly could write a book on all of the things that we accomplished on this trip, everything that I learned, and the many ways that I was blessed. I feel very fortunate to have had this opportunity. I feel so enriched to have met and become friends with the others serving on the team, as well as the people I met in Honduras. They will remain forever in my heart and in my prayers.