

SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM

But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. ~Matthew 6:33

Dear friends and family,

This is holiday season – Thanksgiving and Christmas – when we celebrate the many blessings that God has given us, especially the coming of His Son for our salvation. One thing we are very thankful for is all of YOU! You make it possible for us to serve the Lord and fulfill our calling. Thank you so much for your prayers and support! Through this prayer letter, we hope you can see how you are making a difference through your partnership with us.

Our Trip to South Asia

(Rob's perspective)

In November, we had one of the greatest privileges of our lives, and an answer to years of prayer. We went on a trip to South Asia to see the mission field! The purpose of the trip was to fuel our

passion and develop a deeper understanding of what the Lord is doing through our lives as we serve Him at GFA.

Our time in Asia was incredible. As I look at the 1000+ pictures from our trip and reflect on our time there, I wish I could be back there. I love the dedicated missionaries, the godly leaders, the kids. I am in awe of what God is doing, and so grateful I get to be a part of it.

I was impressed with each of the many missionary leaders we met on the field. They were so gracious to us; they have such compassion for the suffering people all around; they were really passionate about what they do; and they have a huge vision for the future plans and growth of the ministry.

Simon John is one of GFA's top leaders in Asia, overseeing the ministry in a vast region, and he spends about 50% of his time traveling. So it was a great honor for us to spend an entire day with Simon as he

showed us around. Simon left behind a profitable job when the Lord called him to ministry, and he hasn't looked back. And he hasn't let his high position in ministry go to his head. I was told that Simon John personally demonstrated to the students at one of GFA's Bible colleges how to scrub a toilet, setting an example for them.

Simon John took us to two of GFA's street children's home in the city of Delhi. There are 100,000 street children in this one city, who have been orphaned, abandoned by parents, or run away from home. The trauma, neglect, and abuse suffered by these children is appalling. GFA's missionaries have rescued dozens of these children off the streets and are caring for them, teaching them, and showering God's love on them in these homes, oases of hope in an ocean of despair.

When we got to the boys' home, one of the smallest boys, who has polio, climbed into Simon John's arms. Simon is loved by all the children, because he is full of love. He told me that he wishes he could spend all his time working



Simon John with the little boy at the street children's home

with these children. The children's homes are his biggest passion, and he was the one who pioneered them. He is praying we can start homes in more major cities of Asia soon, where there are millions more street children in desperate need.



We had the privilege of attending the very first service at this new church building. The pastor wept with emotion as he told us how this building was an incredible answer to prayer.

With some of the members of the IT team at the ministry headquarters in Asia



One of the highlights of the trip was getting to meet Seema, a GFA-supported woman missionary that we personally sponsor. We learned she has had special training to minister to the poor and needy, and has been leading a team teaching and caring for children in an Asian slum. Seema is on the right in the picture above.

- Praise the Lord for one year of marriage!
- Praise God for giving us the privilege of visiting ministry sites in South Asia!
- Pray for street children's homes in more cities of Asia
- Pray for the Lord to raise up more Bible college students, especially in areas with very few believers
- Pray that the various ministries of GFA will bring the good news of Christ to many families and villages
- Pray for favor with local and national authorities

Eating breakfast with students from one of GFA's Bible colleges. Most of them are first-generation believers, and will serve in areas hostile toward Christians.



Not Your Typical Thanksgiving

By Rebecca

This wasn't my first time to celebrate Thanksgiving in a different culture (the last time was in France), but this Thanksgiving was definitely unlike any I have ever experienced. Even with the absence of American decorations and sales, I had the privilege of witnessing a spirit of gratitude and thankfulness in the hearts and lives of many people throughout the day.

In the morning we drove out to a leper colony. Leprosy is eradicated in most parts of the world, but in Asia there are still over a hundred thousand people who suffer from this skin disease. Although leprosy is curable, many of those who contract it live in rural areas and aren't able to come to (or afford) treatment. There is also a huge negative stigma against lepers. Many times they are forced to leave their families and live in colonies with others who have the same disease, where they have no hope for job opportunities or getting their needs taken care of.

But in areas where GFA is working, they do have hope! In many colonies, women missionaries who have received some additional training serve the lepers by cleaning their wounds, doing simple household chores, helping care for their children, and preparing them food. As we watched one of these sisters cleaning the wounds of a couple of gentlemen, I was touched by how loving and compassionate she was, even while doing a rather nasty task.



Some of the people in the colony we visited have come to know the Lord, and we all gathered in a short worship service before lunch. Their faces were so joyful; even those who hands have been deformed by the leprosy were enthusiastically clapping along as they sang. Then we served them a hearty lunch of rice, curry, and dahl (seasoned lentils). I felt blessed to be able to do that small thing – even though I don't speak their language, it was wonderful to look in their smiling faces and see their thankfulness as I dished food onto their plates.

I think the most memorable part for me happened when we were getting back into the car to head to our next destination. I was the last one to get in, and just before I stepped up to my seat I was suddenly swarmed with several women who wanted to shake my hand and give me a hug. What a treat! I wanted to pour out my love to



these precious people who are so despised by their society, but so loved by our gracious Lord.

After lunch we visited a Bridge of Hope (BOH) center. Rob and I have supported several BOH children over the past years, and just getting to see a center in action really made our partnership so much more tangible. Of course all the kids



were super cute. :) They performed several welcome songs for us, then we taught them a couple of action songs, which they enjoyed immensely – especially the one where we did jumping and spinning.

Part of the BOH program includes providing them a nutritious meal each day, which we got to serve them that afternoon. We also handed out a piece of candy and some stickers as gifts to each one. They didn't want us to leave... as I was trying to get one last picture with a particular student, it turned into an enormous group photo with as many kids as could cram around me.



But we had to leave in order to visit their village before it got dark. Most of the children in that particular BOH center come from the same village, where the main source of income is snake charming. When the pastor in this area wanted to start a BOH center, he had to convince the parents to let their kids go to school. The parents didn't see a need for providing an education, probably assuming that their children would just continue on in the same trade that had been passed down for generations. Now, through BOH, they will have many more doors opened up for them. And 90% of those children come from non-Christian homes, but in the BOH program they are getting to learn that Jesus loves them.

While we were at the village, one of the older gentlemen gave us a performance of the snake charming that they do in the market places to earn their living. It astounded me how calm everyone was, even the kids, just a few feet away from a couple of freshly-caught king cobras... Two of the boys even picked up the snakes at one point.



After their initial resistance to the BOH center, now the parents are beginning to understand the importance of education and are grateful for the work of the local pastor and the BOH staff. In fact, as we were leaving, several of them were asking about the possibility for more of their children to be enrolled.

I am so thankful to the Lord for giving me the privilege of seeing how our work in the USA office is making a difference in the lives of people in Asia. I am also thankful for each one of you, and how you are making it possible for us to be serving Him here! It may seem hard to understand, but your love, prayers, and support are part of how we are able to show God's love to lepers and children (and so much more!) all across Asia. Thank you!

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