

THE CORNERSTONE FOUNDATION

"...the stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone." Mt. 21:42

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***"...until the times of the restoration of all things,
about which God has spoken through the mouth
of his holy prophets from ancient times."***

--Acts 3:21

In the still dark hours of this morning I lay struggling not to wake up and struggling harder not to think about my current great worry--just one thing in the ever-present larger category I'd call "broken things." I didn't know for sure what time it was, but there was no light yet in the sky, and the jungle noises outside our bedroom window were still the noises of the night; no early morning birds stirred yet. The matter which I was trying so hard not to worry about has to do with an unexpected administrative and legal speed-bump regarding the ability for APAH (the Cornerstone Foundation within Honduras) to be exempted from import taxes because of its status as a charitable organization. For the first time ever, we currently have in port, or soon coming into port, not 1 but 5 different shipments of charitable materials (and from 5 different directions), and the government here has just changed the obstacle course for charitable organizations to ship into the country. So the matter is both important and urgent.

In my struggle to think of other things and stay asleep I was praying in my head but kept coming back to my worries. So, I tried quoting scripture in my head, but could only think of snippets and snatches. I tried imagining the details of a crane we are building for agricultural products, but if I worked any harder at the math I knew I was going to wake up completely. My mind kept returning to an unpleasant meeting (about the tax exempt status) in the finance ministry building in the capitol city a couple of days ago, the very thing I was trying so hard not to think about. So, I took a different tack in my silent prayers and asked God for a glimpse of Heaven. Just then the shy brown Zorzal (a type of thrush), herald of the morning, awoke upon its branch outside my window and cried out loudly for the dawn. Might as well get up and start the coffee.



Downstairs in the kitchen I switched on the lights near the coffee pot. Another one of those special little G-8 bulbs flashed out. I sighed. The nearest Lowe's is about 700 miles to the North of here (in the US), and we're out of those bulbs. I'll have to make one out of a G-9. The coffee grinder is clearly on its last legs. I nurse it along to grind enough coffee for one last pot but resign myself to the fact that I'll have to take it into the shop, take it apart, and see if I can fix it. While the coffee is making I take an early morning walk and note that the trees and flowers are all doing fine after the recent rains; but there are stray cattle in the platanos (plantains) that I have to run out and herd back through a broken down section of fence (which I'll have to fix as soon as I can get to it).

I put my falling-apart Bible together from its component parts and do devotions thinking, *Well, at least the Word itself isn't broken--just the binding.* Before I leave the house for whatever broken things the day has in store for me out there, I check to see if there is anything really urgent in my current pile of backlogged email. The email program crashes under its own weight, but comes back up after re-booting. I've just got to figure out a quick shortcut to archive mail.

Then it's time to go out to check on more broken things and check on broken people. I think

my job description, if I had one, should just say this: “fix broken things (and people).”

I find my old motorcycle sitting in a puddle of precious gasoline with an empty tank. (The carburetor is dirty, and the float valve is stuck again.) Looking down at my feet and thinking over my options, it doesn’t take too long to run the numbers and realize that I’m looking at my best two options--left foot and right foot. I really don’t mind walking; it gives me time to think of all of the things I’m grateful for.

The first thing that comes to mind is that my feet and legs still work just fine. I head off into the morning past the Land Cruiser. It runs... for the most part, except half of the electrical system. But, Rosanne needs that to come to work soon. So, I walk on, past the old jeep. I’d already discarded that as an option. The rear differential is out and will have to be replaced. I walk past the tractor, noting that the tire’s flat. Well, maybe I can put enough air in that tire with the hand pump to get it to the *taller* (auto repair shop at the hospital) this afternoon.

I walk past the water tanks for the School and the Children’s Centre. I notice that they are overflowing; stuck valve. That’s an easy fix (at least for now), so I free that up and walk on toward the hospital.

By the time I’m on the dirt road headed toward the hospital I’ve hit a stride and am looking up at the mountains. I almost walk right past two little fellas at the first gate into Don Santiago’s property. These little guys are not much more than 3 years old and not much more than 2 feet tall and are both wearing nothing but their “shores” (their undershorts). I’m not quite sure whose they are, but I’m sure that they must be grandchildren or great grandchildren of Don Chago.

They both wave, and the first one says “¡Hola Maquini!” (Most everyone here refers to me as “Maquini”--a Spanish-speaker attempt at such a strange, foreign name as “McKenney.”) That brightens my day, and I say, “*Good morning little man.*” Then the other one asks: “¿Y el moto?” (as in, “What’s going on with your motorcycle?”). I say “*esta roto*” (it’s broken). They both frown and nod gravely in commiseration. “*And it ran out of gas,*” I add. That news really sets them back and they shake their heads sadly. At three-years-and-change they already know that things break down far too often in this old world, and running out of gas is a serious situation, particularly out here in the campo. This gives me a chuckle that carries me all the way to the hospital.

By the time I get there, men are already hard at work in the repair workshops. I find Mike Yost covered in hydraulic oil, sweating and smiling and wrestling with a rebuilt hydraulic steering pump for the backhoe. Rene gives a warm greeting while repairing a broken waiting room bench. Lorenzo looks up from peering into the entrails of an oxygen concentrator to give a big grin and a sweaty handshake. And Bairon shakes his head and offers a crooked smile as his gaze shifts from a red-lined router on one table to a leaking printer on the other. Sometimes I wonder what it would be like to work with new stuff, and not always, it seems, to be patching together old, broken stuff. But I don’t tell them that. These guys are pretty happy with their work. Wishing I could stay up here and work on broken *stuff*, I head on into the hospital.

There I join the nurses and doctors and techs who are giving it their best to patch together broken *people*. Some of the patients just need a little preventive maintenance: the oil checked, the fluids topped off, maybe even the carburetor cleaned out. But a lot of them need some serious repairs--a valve stuck here, a fried circuit there, a broken relay or worn-out seals. Some of them may even need their rear differentials rebuilt. Still that’s just the mechanics. That’s just the stuff. That is just the parts. But every one of these damaged and broken and worn out parts is connected to a person. And people have mothers and brothers and sisters and Aunt Thelma's. They have opinions and aspirations and relationships and fears and pain, and they have souls. They *are* souls. That makes it all so much more complicated. I try to keep that in mind. But while keeping it in mind, after you take on the needs of the first 20 souls, by 2:00 or 3:00 in the afternoon, Rosanne and I are pretty worn out ...and wishing we’d been able to eat lunch. Still, there are more souls on the ward and more souls with broken parts waiting in the Emergency Room. Some of these are time-consuming but pretty straight-forward. Some I’m not sure what to do with, and some God only knows how to deal with.

On the wards: Just considering surgical patients, there is old Don Heribaldo with a prostate with a stuck valve. Arlen is 15 years old, and his back is broken. There is a little boy (Homer) with a broken elbow. There are three Maria's on the ward with broken gallbladders--Maria Isabela, Maria Josefa, and Maria Telma. Actually we have already removed the broken gallbladders of MI and MJ, so they are already on the road to recovery. But what about Jose over there with end-stage

AIDS and cirrhosis...at 24? Or Ana Rut with metastatic thyroid cancer? She's not yet 30, and I can't get radioactive Iodine treatment in Honduras to save my life...or hers. These are some I don't know what I'm going to do with.



little guy with broken arm awaiting treatment

But just now it is 5:00, and we're waiting for the post reduction films after setting the 3rd forearm fracture of the day--all little guys who went out on the wrong tree branch. The skies have been raining little boys and girls these days since we're just coming into mango season. So, I'm coming around the corner from X-Ray toward Trauma and I'm saying out loud to myself (since no one else is there), *"I'm tired of broken stuff and broken people, Lord; couldn't you give me a new one for a change?"* And then...He did. I just didn't recognize it at first.

For, down the hall, outside our office at Trauma, there was sitting a campesino man, from the mountains by the look of him. I knew, whoever he was, he had to be waiting for me. As I got closer, I looked at his hand and saw that I had to have missed someone in clinic. The cast and pins I remembered, but the face I hardly recognized. About 10 days earlier, this guy--his name is Herman--had come down from the mountains after his cousin had tried to kill him in a dispute over a piece of land. At least that is what he told me at the time. The cousin had taken a hard swing with a sharp machete and ended up just about taking Herman's right hand off.

I remembered talking to Herman at the time he came in as I examined his so badly broken hand. I remembered his "face of stone, and heart of stone." But I had witnessed to him anyway, if sort of perfunctorily, because that is what I figured he really needed most, even if I didn't think he would accept it. I talked to him about his need to look for a new life (or at least a new cousin) and asked, *"What would have happened if the swing had been a little different and he had killed you like he meant to? What's gonna happen when you die?"* I couldn't see any change in that face of stone and heart of stone. So, I just internally shook my head, and we spent the next number of hours in the O.R. putting the many intricate pieces of his hand back together. I remember thinking *"It's going to take a whole lot of work and a whole lot of God's grace for this hand ever to be worth much; but he'll still be mean as a snake unless God makes him over from scratch."*

Now here he was, two weeks later for follow-up, sitting there patiently after having been forgotten for hours. He'd missed the last bus home, and still he had this big grin on his face. I could hardly believe that this was the same stone-faced, hard-eyed, mean-mouthed guy whose hand I'd done my best to put back together a couple of weeks ago...and that's because he wasn't.... I mean, he wasn't the same old broken guy. God had sent me a new one. Herman told me that while he was in the hospital, he'd thought about it all and where his life was going, and that when our Chaplain, Oscar, met with him again just before he left the hospital a couple of weeks earlier, he'd decided to follow Christ. The change in his countenance and the grin on his face and the change in his spirit--which my spirit recognized--attested to a new creature, and it made me think of the passage in Acts (at the beginning of this newsletter) about the time which is coming, the time of restoration of all things. I guess this is the glimpse of Heaven I had asked for. I heard quietly, but as clearly as if someone were talking to me, that this life of fixing broken things is just practice. It's an apprenticeship for our next job. It is my hope and prayer that you and I will be a part of that time of restoration. Considering all of the broken things and broken people in this broken world, there will be plenty to do. But I want to fix things so that they *stay* fixed. I want to fix things like new, like Herman. So far, only God can do that. I'm hoping someday He'll show us how.

"And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. The

meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. Isaiah 29: 18,19

God's grace and hope,

Jeff McKenney, MD

News and Needs

McKenneys in the US The McKenneys will be in the US @ August 18 – September 29. If you'd like to see them or hear from them, email them at mckenneys@lomadeluz.net with cc's to sally.mahoney@mchsi.com and mmmck@bellsouth.net and let us know. If we can make it happen, we will.

Births Two missionary families received baby boys into the world since the last newsletter. The Tumlisons now have Lucas Joel, and the Miknaitis clan has Levi James. Welcome to the babies, and felicitations to their families.

Praise--Employment Burden Those of you on the Email Prayer Alert list will probably remember that back in January we found ourselves facing an enormous problem regarding labor law changes in Honduras. It was as if someone had placed a ton of lead in our laps and then told us to rise. In recent years Honduras had passed a series of economically crippling labor laws which were designed to look as if they were in the interest of the worker, but in practice were causing unemployment to skyrocket. These laws had to do with mandatory minimum wage increases--all of them to be applied *retroactively*, and which, if all were complied with, would mean our Honduran staff's wages would have to go up 225%. As you can imagine, this would mean for us (as it has for most employers) that we could not pay enough workers (at that level of pay) to continue to function. This forces the great majority of Honduran employers to either break the laws and "assume the risk" or fire most of their employees or close their doors and go out of business. We do not believe we should do any of these things. We sent out an email prayer request, and many of you prayed. We hadn't yet given an update. It just took some time and a lot of work to find a solution and begin to implement a solution. Through researching the options with Honduran lawyers we learned of a labor law option that has only come onto the books in the last year or so. This allows

us to approach most all of our labor contracts on an hourly basis. Under this new approach, the employee is paid at a significantly higher rate per hour (and in accordance with the new laws), but the hours can be regulated much more efficiently, which offsets the increased cost. It also makes it possible for the employees to work more than one job at once, gives them more control over what type of work they do, and makes their time a commodity which belongs to them...and it also means that employers won't be forced to let them go and leave them jobless. So...the past several months have seen a lot of extra hard administrative work writing all new contracts and work schedules and holding a series of meetings with employees to explain the changes. We are just now "over-the-hump" of implementing this new administrative approach and already seeing significant benefits and opportunities with the new efficiency. What looked like a serious possibility of "the end of the road" has--through research, communication, hard work, and more communication, and finally and certainly the grace of God--been turned into a benefit to all. Thank you for praying for this. Please continue to do so. It will take some months before we are certain of this new approach.

A New Challenge Now there seems to be a new legal/administrative challenge. It is the "broken thing" which Dr. Jeff mentioned in the lead article. It seems that there has been another new set of regulations passed and another new set of regulators put in place far away in the capitol city that have to do with the ability for a charitable organization such as APAH (The Cornerstone of Honduras) to ship donated materials into the country. These new regulations and regulators have several containers of donated medicines, materials, and equipment tied up in the ports (where they are being fined hundreds of dollars every day) on the one hand, but the regulators won't process the paperwork to get them out of the ports on the other hand. This might just be a matter of new and difficult requirements, but it also may be more the outworking in this world of spiritual battles in the heavens. Either way, we do ask for your prayers in this costly matter. While we are doing all that can be done to comply, we believe that it is through prayer that this will be resolved.

Needs We will be very **short-staffed** this Summer and Fall doctor-wise. Please pray for God to cover this time with His sufficiency. Please also pray for God to send us more **full-time primary care**

physicians (this is an urgent need). One of the wound care nurses has also asked me to remind our readers that rolled gauze and 2 x 2 and 3 x 3 gauze are constantly needed and used supplies which aren't available in Honduras in those sizes. (We wish you could send us radioactive Iodine as do-ably as the gauze.) We also need you to pray against the **increasing lawlessness and violence** here. Please pray for **favor with the government with regard to the renewal and continuance of APAH's non-profit status in Honduras**. Please pray for the **missionaries who have been facing significant health issues** (Dr. Shaw and his family, Lisa Bradley, Peggy Yost, Liz MacKenzie, and John Alden are just a few of the ones who come to mind.) Please also pray for **provision for the Children's Centre**. Pray also for **teachers for the Bilingual Kindergarten and (hopefully) Elementary School**. We are very much looking for **a teacher who can commit to a year at the Bilingual School to teach First Grade or Kindergarten**. The time needed is Jan. or Feb. 2013- Nov. 2013. And, finally, pray for whatever God lays on your heart regarding Cornerstone. Ask Him, and I think He will speak to you.



earnest work at the Bilingual Kindergarten

In Closing

I recently read a book by Grace Fabian, a Wycliffe missionary who served for 30+ years in Papua New Guinea, staying there to complete the work even after her husband was murdered by one of the Nabak people whom she and her husband were trying to serve. (The book is *Outrageous Grace*, and I recommend it.) At one point as she wondered what to do after her husband's death and in the midst of increasing danger and harassment, Grace remembered the words of a hymn written by

Margaret Clarkson (1981). I think you will find encouragement--as she did--in its words:

*God of the ages, History's Maker,
Planning our pathway, Holding us fast,
Shaping in mercy All that concerns us,
Father we praise you, Lord of the past.
....God of tomorrow, Strong Overcomer,
Princes of darkness Own [admit to] your command:
What then can harm us? We are your people,
Now and forever kept by your hand.*

As you look about you at the worries and troubles which exist in your personal life or in the world at large (and at this juncture in time there are certainly many troubles in the world at large), may you remember that our Lord is indeed History's Maker. May you see Him extending his large, strong (yet tender) Hand to you--inviting you to take hold of that hand as you walk on in His company.

Thank you for your prayers and for all you do.

--Sally Mahoney for Cornerstone Foundation