

Blessings Reserved

By Rich Rice

We have all experienced them at one point or another. Occasions when the Lord grabs our attention and teaches us a needed lesson. Recently, as the light faded over Cotzal following a lengthy meeting with a local land owner, Tabita told me a story. Honestly, I was exhausted and wanting to call it a day. As I look back now, the fact that I tracked with this story was clearly divine intervention.

The team from Central Community Church had visited Colegio Horeb the previous week. During the week, many of the school leaders voiced a few pressing needs. Most had a financial solution. One particular need that was presented surrounded a retreat for the graduating sixth graders and other alumni who had attended Horeb. The leadership was very hopeful that the retreat could be held at a nearby resort. They wanted to make this a special occasion to encourage the students to remain focused on education and make good life decisions. Bible Study and Christian messages would be woven through the event. The school needed to raise about \$600 to pull it off.

Several of the team members approached me and inquired if there was any way they could pool their money and cover the event cost. The \$600 could easily have been raised amongst the team. No problem - open our wallets and problem solved. But the week sped by and we never finalized a plan to offer the money to the school. The Holy Spirit nagged at me to let it go and watch what would happen. It would not have been difficult to respond to this request for such an awesome event.

That evening, Tabita shared with excitement how she had rallied eleven pastors from various community churches to gather for a conversation. She appealed to them about the importance of providing a Christian education for the youth of the community. How Horeb was playing an important role for the kingdom. How this education would benefit the next generation in the community. The pastors listened and began to shake their heads in agreement. Then she presented the pastors with this challenge: "Present the financial need for a youth retreat to the people of your church and ask them to support the children of Cotzal."

For years the church has minimally supported the efforts of Colegio Horeb. During this one engaging appeal, Tabita rallied the Church (big C). The result - for the first time the churches united to take an offering to support the retreat at Colegio Horeb. Unbelievably, the dollar challenge was met and they raised enough money to support the event.



The lesson I was reminded of through this story: Be careful not to steal another's blessing. As wealthy missionaries, it is easy to solve these needs. Earlier in the week, we could have opened our wallets and paid for the event. Those good intentions would have robbed Tabita of the opportunity to rally the Church behind the youth of Cotzal. It would have robbed the pastors of the opportunity to share with their congregations a worthwhile need in their midst. It would have robbed the townspeople

of an opportunity to rally together, pooling their precious resources to help the children in the community.

One of the hardest things a short-term missionary must learn to do is to say no, I am not willing to help financially. I have the means, but I am not going to help. I do not believe there is a single “right” approach to this dilemma. Sometimes we are asked to respond with our wallets. But before we take this quick and often easier approach, it is best to take a few minutes to seek the leading of the Holy Spirit. Then move forward in faith that the Lord has got it covered.