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There is a Future...



About a year ago as I began preparations to start RICE. I knew that one key element of the organization would be for me to make 3 field visits to Thailand, Russia, and West Africa.

Read with children near Thai border with Burma

This was to happen over the first 6-8 months primarily to:

- See the problems first hand.
- Learn from the experts already engaged in the work.
- Understand the key issues.
- Begin to test and refine some of the ideas (the seeds) that had been planted in my life. Does this make sense? Can we actually do that?
- Gather valuable information on for example everything from logistics to "what should a medical clinic in Thailand look like?"
- Conduct some initial relief efforts. Provide food, medicines, give service, build houses anything that needed to be done i.e. get my hands dirty.
- Build relationships and contacts in these areas.

This journey has been incredible so far - far better than I ever could have imagined. Although we still have a long road to go, I believe these initial goals have been accomplished in part and can bless the organization for years to come. We will share with you some more about these trips and what has been accomplished on our website.

In this newsletter though I want to share what is becoming the bigger lesson for me; what has become the most important thing. The biggest blessing is being found in the people both in the beauty of the hearts of the servants, and the need for hope in the faces of the desperate. What I am trying to say is, "it is the people stupid" - me being the stupid one.

During all the years of pursuing self and the almighty dollar I had forgotten this simple fact of life. I didn't need people. I really didn't have time for them. I needed work out of them yes. They were to be worked as a team to get something accomplished. Nothing personal mind you. I always felt you had better keep people at a safe distance because they can hurt you. I had missed the boat and the ocean. Does this ring a bell for any of you?

What brings me to fulfillment now provides the spark in my eyes and the inspiration to keep trying is what I have found in the people along this magnificent journey. I saw the beauty of the heart of a servant in the back unknown dirt roads of Northern Thailand near the border with Burma where the genocide and the atrocities go on just a kilometer away. I found it that day in a small hill tribe village with chickens and pigs running around. A Lahu man who lives in a small wood hut at the end of the dirt road has scrimped and saved to build a brick church next to his house with a cross on top. Here he serves his village in the humblest of ways and goes into Burma regularly at great personal danger to help in anyway he can.

I found it again in Russia on a road concealed by endless forests in the Northern Province of Kostroma where log cabins with colorful shudders fall over under their own weight in fields of dandy lions. Here it was the beauty of what happens when a group of Russian 25-30 year olds on staff with the Hope Chest organization work tirelessly and with passion to care for kids that are left behind in a system with no hope.



Neya Orphanage, Northern Russia, Kostroma province.

The road I took that day went through large old sterile institutions with creaky wood planks, bad smells, exposed plumbing, and paint chipping off the walls. What I saw in those servants inspires me.

For those desperate and needing hope I have seen the incredible pain and confusion that sits on the faces of the normally smiling friendly Thais of Phrang Nga Phuket. They are now sad with no expression and live burdened by the nightmare of the tsunami catastrophe December last. They have suffered the loss of one or two from their family and one or two of their friends from next door. The hopelessness can also be seen on the sick and dying refugees in the medical clinics of Mae Sot Southern Thailand. Some here (14 a month) have lost their legs in senseless mine injuries. Others suffering from HIV/Aids needing care and hope from medicines they don't have.



I also found a need for hope in the children. Children that are in the camps or in the orphanages who look at you with eyes hinting of a life that is passing them by.

They want to know someone could actually just love them. They are the forgotten, the not wanted, the rejected. In its most innocent moment it is the little Burmese boy who has no one to care for him, lives at the medical clinic and who just wanted me to buy him a fish stick that day and I mean a big fish stick. In its most tragic moment it is like Sveta a Russian girl 13 yrs old from the Sudai orphanage whose mother one night drunk again and desperate herself poured boiling water on her from her beautiful face down to her toes because she hated her. Most are shy from stories like this of rejection wanting your affection but not feeling deserving of it. Unfortunately, I don't believe I have seen the worst of it yet. It may come when I visit Sierra Leone or Sudan or Ethiopia in August. These are just some of the faces

of need and these are just a few of the beautiful stories of those serving.

What it boils down to is this: Think of the gift of relief or humanitarian aid (all big non personal words) as very personal. Really it's about giving hope, love, and mercy and really not that difficult to give. You can be a part of it yourself by volunteering for a trip or providing resources or a donation for an organization like RICE, Partners Worldwide or Hope Chest to do it on your behalf. Because you see it first happens one to one. Mostly it is just trying to connect in a personal way and being there. It is simply found in what God does person to person, heart to heart, eyes to eyes, soul to soul. This is where God moves. I want to be a part of that. I hope you will join and help me.

I met a pastor on the Russian trip who walked away from a vibrant ministry 10 years or more ago for personal reasons. With all the best intentions he felt he had to give it up for what he thought was the right thing at the time. During this recent trip his life changed. His life is now being restored. His time is now. He is gifted and ready to move back in service and now waits on his call. During this trip he was able to give heartily one to one with the kids with many blessings of love and comfort, the gift of sport and fun. After visiting one of the orphanages and being moved by the overwhelming experience he got up and told the group that he to was an orphan and that.... **there is a future.**



Come be a part of that hope and a future for those that need you.



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