

A 21 DAY PERSONAL RETREAT TO CHANGE THE WORLD



MISSION

To love Him and to make Him loved

Dr. Terry and Renee Wortz

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A 21 Day Personal Retreat To Change The World

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The Miracle Prayer by Father Peter Rookey

Shared with the world through *Catholic Kids 101*



MISSION

*To love Him and to
make Him loved*

To our four children:
two by birth, two by marriage,
and to our six amazing grandchildren.



Our
DEDICATION

The INTRODUCTION



I first met Dr. Terry Wortz, MD and his wife Renee in 2017. I had moved to the sunny Florida town of Ave Maria around the same time they did and little did I know the adventure I was about to embark on with this faith-filled couple.

As we sat visiting one summer evening, I began to understand that this humble duo had a story that needed to be told. Over the years, many people had asked them to share their experiences about what it was like being medical missionaries to Kazakhstan soon after the fall of the Soviet Union... but they hesitated. Dr. Terry and Renee didn't want the story to end up being about them but *about the Lord Jesus and His power working through them.*

I was deeply touched when one day Dr. Terry put into my hands the newsletters that he had written during the time they were "Kaz" medical missionaries. He told me to go ahead and try to edit them in such a way that their story would give glory to God. After Dr. Terry, Renee and I spent nearly a year together praying, discussing and rewriting, their story was ready to be told.

The only piece of advice I would give before you begin is this: sincerely open your heart to Christ anew during these next twenty-one days. He will then draw you close to His Heart, allowing His power to flow through you. Only in this way do our deeds become truly "good deeds," when we find ourselves serving others not because we must, but because of who we are in Christ.

Jean Prather, Catholic Kids 101

I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord.
They will be my people, and I will be their God,
for they will return to me with all their heart.

Jeremiah 24:7

DAY

One

Our Father who art in Heaven,
hallowed be Thy Name;
Thy Kingdom come.
Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
Amen.

NEWSLETTER #1

“And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”

1Corinthians 13:13

Our journey together really began in 1972 in Grass Lake, Michigan at the Assemblies of God campground called: FA-HO-LO. Terry and I were both born into families that belonged to the Assemblies of God. This summer campground held a very special place in our hearts. As a matter of fact, both of our families had been coming to this camp for several generations.

The ministers and missionaries that came to FA-HO-LO to preach were some of the most outstanding speakers Terry and I had ever heard. Also outstanding was the music. The main building at FA-HO-LO was called the “Tabernacle” and it was made of wood and cement block and had a big metal roof. When the summer rains would come, the sound from the roof would get really loud. However, that wouldn’t stop the music in the slightest. We would just get more exuberant in singing our songs, praising the Lord Jesus!

The very air of the Tabernacle seemed to be charged with electricity. It was the Holy Spirit that filled the atmosphere of this place. There was a huge sign up in front of the Tabernacle that read: “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord.” Zechariah 4:6. And when the Holy Spirit fell, so did a lot of people. I mean literally falling to their knees and putting their faces to the ground and adoring the Lord.

I remember years later Terry's mother telling me about an incident concerning Terry when he was just a boy attending FA-HO-LO. During a time of praise and worship, he started signing in American Sign Language. A lady near Terry's mother commented that she didn't realize Terry knew American Sign Language. His mother told her that he didn't. The lady said to his mother, "Well, I do!" And she began telling her all the things that Terry was signing.

Around that same time, after talking with one of the missionaries visiting FA-HO-LO, Terry felt that God was calling him to be a missionary some day. It was such a strong conviction that it never really left him.

I too had many wonderful prayer times at FA-HO-LA, but one extraordinary time stands out above all the rest. It was at the end of the Memorial Day Youth Retreat in 1972. Terry and I had gone to the camp all of our lives, yet we had never met each other until this particular weekend. The night before the retreat ended, we were both down by the lake on which the camp was built. I was sitting on a park bench overlooking the beautiful water and taking in the sounds of nature. Terry came up to me and introduced himself. I told him my name was Renee. Then he asked if I knew what time it was because he had forgotten his watch and needed to meet his parents. I looked at my watch and gave him the time and that was the end of our conversation because he had to get going.

The next day I walked into, or as Terry likes to say, sauntered into the Tabernacle wearing a navy blue and white polka dot halter dress. Now that may sound a bit scandalous for me to have been wearing such a dress. After all, the Assemblies of God denomination was considered a very conservative denomination. However, I truly thought the dress was tastefully designed. My long, thick, curly hair hid the open back and I figured no one would even notice that it was a halter dress.

I figured wrong. Terry noticed. He told me much later that any girl with guts enough to wear that kind of a dress to FA-HO-LO, he just had to get to know!

Terry and I sat together and enjoyed the service and then the invitation was given to come and pray. I was really feeling a pull to tell Jesus that I wanted to hold nothing back from Him. I wanted to give Him my whole life! I remember weeping, with my hands open and my arms stretched up saying, "I love You, Lord! I offer You all that I am and all that I ever hope to be. Do with me whatever pleases You!"

Then I heard a voice say, "Stop praying and look toward the end of the altar."

I stopped praying and looked to my right. There was Terry.

He was lifting his hands and praising Jesus like no one else was around. He was praying so intensely that I don't think even an earthquake would have moved him.

Then I heard a voice say, "If you are obedient to Me and My Word, this is the man I have chosen for you to marry."

I looked around wondering if there was someone playing a joke on me but I didn't see anyone.

Then I heard the same sentence again but this time with a little more force.

I replied, "You do know I'm only 14. Well, I have a birthday in a few weeks, but still... I'm not in search of a husband! What am I supposed to do with this kind of message?"

Then there was just silence and I finally bowed my head and prayed, "I really think it's awesome that You talked to me but I don't have a clue what to do about it. So I'll leave the details to You. I trust You, Jesus. And if this really is from You, then You will have to tell Terry because I can't."



It was a day just like any other day. Joyce sat in our living room telling us all about the sick little boy, Ali, she had just brought back to the United States. Joyce was a Registered Nurse who was serving in Kazakhstan as a medical missionary. We knew Joyce through her sister, Judi, who was the mother of our daughter's best friend. The almost two-year-old Ali that Joyce spoke of had a serious heart condition. The organization "Healing the Children" was sponsoring the child's trip to the United States and his upcoming surgery.

Joyce went on to explain that the boy's parents were unable to come with him. So it fell to Joyce to bring this little guy on the long and difficult journey to America. The child's father was a surgeon in Kazakhstan and understood how serious the situation was. He and his family were Muslim and his last words to Joyce were, "If you bring back my son healthy, I will believe in your God." After explaining all this, Joyce then dropped the bombshell. "Dr. Terry, would you and Renee bring Ali back to Kazakhstan when he's recovered?" Joyce said that she could not stay in America for the next two months waiting for the little boy so she needed to find a medical missionary escort to take him home after he recovered from his surgery.

Terry then turned to me and asked, “What do you think, Renee? Instead of vacationing in Cancun this year, how about packing up our long underwear and going on a mission trip to Kazakhstan?”

Now Terry thought he knew what my answer would be before he asked the question. We had made a decision that before each of our two children graduated from high school they would go on a mission trip to serve the poor. Our daughter, Libby, had gone to Mexico and our son, Gary, had gone to Brazil. Both times Terry asked if I would like to go and each time I had declined. Terry thought I would give him the same answer this time too.

What Terry didn’t know was the Holy Spirit and I had been having a conversation about this very subject. In prayer, the Lord reminded me of a promise I had made before Terry and I were married. I promised that some day, when the Lord called Terry to be a missionary, I too would go with him to serve. I understood that “some day” had now arrived.

My answer to Terry’s question was simply, “Yes! I think we need to do this.”

I thought Terry was going to pass out.

He turned white as a ghost and exclaimed, “Renee, you just said, ‘Yes!’ You never say, ‘Yes!’

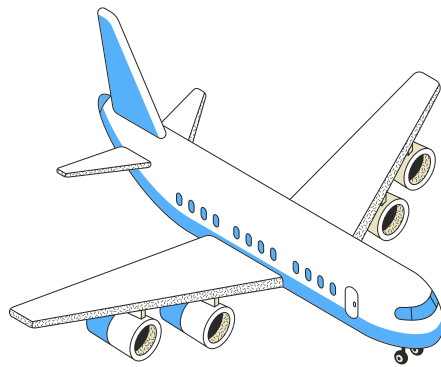
Terry and I knew very little about Kazakhstan. We knew that it was really cold in the winter, that it was near Siberia and that it was where the Communist concentration camps had been before the fall of the Soviet Union. We also knew that after the recent collapse of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan was starting to open up to let missionaries come into their former atheistic provinces or what they would call an “oblast.”

Our day had suddenly turned into a day not like any other day!

After Joyce left, we decided to head to Barnes and Noble to find some travel books on Kazakhstan. I’m not so sure that was such a good idea. We were able to find one book that basically said nobody goes to Kazakhstan unless they have to go to Kazakhstan!

So began our preparation. We bought a Russian Rosetta Stone language course and started learning how to say, “I don’t speak Russian,” and “I don’t understand,” ten different ways. I’m joking... kind of.

A whole lot of prayer, buying tickets, checking passports and sharing with family and friends about our upcoming adventure were just some of the things that filled our busy days as we prepared for our mission trip to Kazakhstan.



TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Psalm 121:5-8

The Lord watches over you – the Lord is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep you from all harm – He will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and your going both now and forevermore.

Miracle Prayer

Lord, Jesus, I come before You just as I am.
I am sorry for my sins. I repent of my sins. Please forgive me.
In Your Name I forgive all others for what they have done against me.
I renounce Satan, the evil spirits and all their works.
I give You my entire self, Lord Jesus, now and forever.
I invite You into my life, Jesus. I accept You as my Lord, God and Savior.
Heal me. Change me. Strengthen me in body, soul and spirit.
Come Lord Jesus, cover me with Your Precious Blood and fill me with Your Holy Spirit!
I love You, Jesus! I praise You, Jesus! I thank You, Jesus!
I shall follow You every day of my life.
Amen.

DAY

Two

Our Father who art in Heaven,
hallowed be Thy Name;
Thy Kingdom come.
Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
Amen.

NEWSLETTER #2

And then it happened.

The unthinkable.

Ali died.

It turned out that Ali had been very ill. The best American pediatric cardiologists were unable to save him. The “Healing the Children” organization asked if we would still consider making the mission trip to Kazakhstan. They thought if Terry would speak with the boy’s father, doctor-to-doctor, it would soften the blow. They also wanted us to bring desperately needed medical supplies. We agreed to go.

Terry contacted the children’s hospital where the surgery had been performed and requested a consultation with the child’s surgeon. When Terry walked into the room where the doctors were gathered, he recognized one of them. This man had gone to medical school with Terry and that connection instantly broke the ice. The cardiologist who performed the surgery explained that Ali was born with only three chambers in his heart instead of four. He did his very best but was unable to save him.

As we continued to prepare for our trip, I began the task of packing our clothes. We knew that it would be really cold so I started packing things like wool socks, mittens and long underwear. I found a hat that looked like a bomber pilot hat. Can you picture the style? It was brown leather and had fur inside with long flap ear coverings.

That part of packing was actually the easy part. The difficult part was packing up the personal effects of Ali. This is what we were to deliver to the family now, not their boy.

Like I mentioned, the mission agency gave us a list of medical supplies that were desperately needed. Terry went to work obtaining as many of the things on the list as possible. He contacted his colleagues and spoke with hospital administrators. Pretty soon the supplies just started rolling in. When it was all said and done, we had over fifty large boxes to take on the plane with us. Terry called the airline to find out the best course of action in transporting all these boxes. He found out every box had to be shrink-wrapped, taped and then addressed on all four sides. He also numbered each one and kept detailed information of the contents. It took two big pickup trucks to fit everything we had. Terry, my father, and a friend loaded up all the boxes in their trucks the night before we were to leave for the airport.

The morning of our departure, we woke up to fog so thick you could have cut it. Despite the fog, we were able to make it to the airport safely. We arrived a couple hours earlier than we normally would because all the boxes needed to be unloaded and then sent through security. However, as soon as we arrived at the Grand Rapids, Michigan airport, we were told that our flight had been delayed because of the fog. That meant there was a really good chance we would miss our connecting flight in Chicago.

We discussed our options and came to the decision that if we started driving right away, we could make it to Chicago's O'Hare Airport in time to catch our flight. Terry then called the airline in Chicago and explained our situation. He asked them to be ready to receive all the boxes so we could be on our scheduled flight. He was assured that they would be ready for us when we got there. However, somewhere between Grand Rapids and Chicago, the rules changed. When we arrived at O'Hare, we were told we should have brought the boxes days, not hours in advance!

Despite this bad news, we decided to go ahead and unload the trucks. We hired a skycap to help us transport everything, boxes and all, into the airport. When that was finally done, the skycap and I sat together, watching and waiting. Honestly, I didn't know what was going to happen next.

I began to pray.

I watched Terry at the ticket counter. I knew he was highly frustrated but he remained calm. The gentleman behind the ticket counter turned out to be extremely kind and helpful. He went out of his way to make things go as smoothly as possible for us. He was able to rebook our tickets on Air India and arranged for all our boxes and luggage to be accepted.

The man's name was "Angel."

Terry and I had several hours to wait before our new flight took off so we struck up a conversation with our skycap. We noticed he had an accent and inquired where he was from. He told us Bolivia. We asked about his life and then shared some things about ourselves. Eventually we asked him if he knew Jesus. He told us he wasn't a follower of Jesus but that his mother was and that she was always praying for him. He then admitted his life had been out of control in Bolivia and that he had moved to the United States hoping to get things in order. However, the more he told us about his life now, we realized that his move to America hadn't changed things much.

Finally Terry said to him, "Well, I think you're the reason our travel plans got messed up! God is trying to get your attention!" The man stared at Terry with a puzzled look on his face and then asked, "Are you saying that God allowed your travel plans to be messed up just so you could talk with me?"

We explained that Jesus loves him so much that He would do whatever it takes to get his attention. We could see this man's face soften while he pondered this possibility.

As we all sat thinking about the events of the morning that brought a Michigan doctor and his wife with their fifty plus boxes to be sitting in the middle of the third busiest airport in America, helped by a man named "Angel" and talking about Jesus with a lost young man with a praying mama in Bolivia when we should have already been on an airplane flying to Kazakhstan, well, it kind of makes one's head spin.

We offered to pray with our new friend and he accepted. When we finally said our good byes, Terry and I were sensing that God was already orchestrating our trip to Kazakhstan in a very powerful way and we hadn't even left America yet!

As we boarded the Air India plane, it was apparent that there were very few passengers booked on the flight. We ended up having several rows of seats all to ourselves so we could really stretch out and sleep. Thankfully, it was an uneventful flight and with the twelve-hour difference in time, it ended up being in the middle of the night when we finally arrived in Kazakhstan.

Joyce and a couple of the other nurses were there at the airport waiting for us. Together we unloaded our luggage and all the boxes of medical supplies and put them on the conveyor belt for inspection. After we were done getting our exercise for the night and receiving the green light from security, we were ready to meet up with the rest of the missionaries.

The group of American missionaries had rented a big truck so we were able to fit all the boxes in this one vehicle. We had landed in the city of Almaty so now we boarded a train that would take us on a nine-hour ride to Karaganda.

So far we had learned how to say, “I am an American and I don’t speak Russian,” in about five different ways. Russian is a difficult language to master and we hadn’t had a whole lot of time to study it. Fortunately, there were translators available to help us communicate.

Once in Karaganda, we were told that we would be taken immediately to meet Ali’s family. We were to be the honored guests at what was called a bishparmach. The only things we were told about a bishparmach are there would be a lot of food like our Thanksgiving dinner and that as the honored guests we would be offered the eyeballs of a goat or horse intestines. When we found this out, Terry quipped, “I know people eat chitlins, so maybe that’s what we should pray for.” Our prayers were answered.

Unfortunately.

Looking back, if we would have been offered a goat eyeball, one gulp and it would have been over. However, we were offered seemingly endless miles of horse intestines served in an oily broth.

As the honored guests, we were seated at places in the middle of the table, not the head. The matriarch sat across from us. Our translator sat on one side and Joyce sat on the other. How can I describe the man who sat across from us? Have you ever seen the James Bond movies? Imagine the big tall guy with the gold teeth. That was the guy sitting across from us. Except instead of gold, his teeth were silver.

It was a fairly small apartment with approximately thirty people in attendance. At one point, Ali’s parents confessed that never in their lives would they have believed that they would be sharing a meal with Americans. They had been told that Americans had horns! Without missing a beat Terry said with a completely straight face, “They made us saw them off before we boarded the plane.”

It got very quiet and then suddenly the entire room erupted with laughter!

We found out something quite significant. It was their custom that when someone dies, they mourned for forty days and then there was a party to celebrate the person’s life. The day we arrived was exactly 40 days since the day that Ali had died.

God’s timing is always perfect!

Terry was then asked to say something about their little son. Remember, Terry and I had never actually met Ali, but we had been praying and asking the Lord to give us just the right words to say when we finally did meet his family. Terry said, “Your son has done more in his short little life to bring people together from opposite sides of the world than men who have lived for seventy years. Today I pronounce that he is a man and we celebrate your son’s life!”

At these words, all the people in the room began to weep. It got to the point that we began to wonder if Terry had said something that had offended them. What we soon found out is that in their culture the most tragic thing that could happen to a family is to have a son who does not grow to maturity. Terry had unknowingly said the very words these people needed to hear when he validated this little boy’s life by proclaiming that Ali did die “a man.”

After the dinner was over, Ali’s father invited Terry to visit him the next day at his office in the hospital where he worked. He was a surgeon and wanted to talk doctor-to-doctor about what had happened to his son. Terry visited him the next day and was able to tell him all the details.

When they finished their conversation about the boy, the man then said to Terry, “I know I am a sinner. What do I have to do to know your God?” Terry and I had never mentioned anything about Jesus to this man or his family but apparently the Lord had been working on this man’s heart long before we showed up. Terry then explained that our God understood his pain because His only Son, Jesus, had died on a cross to save us from our sins. Before Terry left, the man accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. This was one of the many amazing and powerful things that God did in our two weeks in Kazakhstan.

At the end of our visit, the leader of the group of American missionaries came to speak with us. He began, “It is clear that God has used you two in a very powerful way during your visit. We have a great need for an American doctor to serve with us long term as a medical missionary. Terry, I think God is calling you to be that doctor.”

With tears in his eyes, Terry answered, “I do appreciate your kind words and encouragement. However, I’m never coming back to this place unless I see a nine foot Jesus walking on the water telling me to go back to Kazakhstan!”

He continued, “Renee and I will pray for you that God will send you the right doctor.”

Then Terry wiped a tear from his eye and added, “But it’s not me.”

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Jonah 1:1-3

The word of the Lord came to Jonah, son of Amittai: Set out for the great city of Nineveh, and preach against it; for their wickedness has come before me. But Jonah made ready to flee to Tarshish, away from the Lord. He went down to Joppa, found a ship going to Tarshish, paid the fare, and went down in it to go with them to Tarshish, away from the Lord.

Miracle Prayer

Lord, Jesus, I come before You just as I am.

I am sorry for my sins. I repent of my sins. Please forgive me.

In Your Name I forgive all others for what they have done against me.

I renounce Satan, the evil spirits and all their works.

I give You my entire self, Lord Jesus, now and forever.

I invite You into my life, Jesus. I accept You as my Lord, God and Savior.

Heal me. Change me. Strengthen me in body, soul and spirit.

Come Lord Jesus, cover me with Your Precious Blood and fill me with Your Holy Spirit!

I love You, Jesus! I praise You, Jesus! I thank You, Jesus!

I shall follow You every day of my life.

Amen.

DAY

Three

Our Father who art in Heaven,
hallowed be Thy Name;
Thy Kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Amen.

NEWSLETTER #3

When we got home from our first trip to Kazakhstan, the words spoken by the leader of the missionary team haunted Terry, “There is a great need for an American doctor to serve with us. I think God is calling you to be that doctor, Terry.”

But Terry just repeated what he said in Kazakhstan, “I’m not going back there unless I see a nine foot tall Jesus walking on the water!”

Terry then played Jonah for the next six months and he was miserable.

He knew that the Hope Mobile Medical Clinic was all ready and waiting to be shipped to Kazakhstan as soon as there was an American medical missionary doctor to send it to. That fact weighed heavily on him. He also understood from our two weeks visit to Kazakhstan just how very difficult it would be to live there for a longer length of time. Our Michigan winters would be considered mild compared to the Siberian temperatures. You never knew if you would have electricity, water or heat. We didn’t know the Russian language. To do the very simplest task would often take all day. You had to get government approval for pretty much everything you did. Many things there made no sense to us.

Life in Kazakhstan would be just plain hard!

One morning, as Terry came to end of his struggle, he said, “I have everything money can buy and yet I am absolutely miserable because I know I am out of God’s will. I might as well say ‘yes!’ and be miserable in Kazakhstan. At least I will be in obedience to God.”

Terry and I had a long talk that day. Deep down he knew he was the one God was calling to be the medical missionary doctor in Kazakhstan. The leader of the Kazakhstan missionary team was right and I was in agreement. We then contacted the Mission Agency and said we would like to talk about what we needed to do in order to get to Kazakhstan as soon as possible.

That phone call changed our lives forever.

Many have asked us how our two children reacted to the news of their parents' change of lifestyle. Libby, who had recently become Mrs. Wright, cried when we first told her the news.

The response of our college-age son Gary was, "Remember how you have always told me that you are proud of me for choosing to follow the Lord Jesus? I want you to know that I'm proud of you too! Can I have your stereo?"



One of the more interesting ongoing adventures of our missionary work is how God is using the Rotary clubs to help fund the ongoing needs of the Hope Medical Clinic.

Before going back to Kazakhstan, we received a call from a Rotary club asking if we could host two Russian farmers. Unfortunately, the dates they requested didn't work for us because we were already housing a visiting missionary at that time. The next week we got a call from another Rotary club asking if we could house two Russian bankers. We thought two back-to-back Russian calls were a little odd but the dates worked so we told them we would be happy to host the Russian bankers.

Julia and Natalia were soon our Russian guests for a week. They helped us with our Russian and we, in turn, helped them with their English. Each day we took them to Rotary functions and then brought them to stores so they could go "American shopping."

As a result of this, we had several chances to share with the Rotarians about our medical mission plans to Kazakhstan. Terry was invited to come to a Rotary meeting after our Russian guests left and give a formal presentation to the club.

Now on one of Julia and Natalia's shopping excursions, a woman shopper overheard them speaking in Russian. She walked over to the girls and introduced herself. Her name was Irene and she was from Kazakhstan! She had immigrated to Michigan with her American husband just two weeks prior. Irene told the girls that she missed speaking Russian and wondered if they could get together for a visit. Our Russian guests gave Irene our phone number and said to have her husband call us to ask if they could come over for a visit.

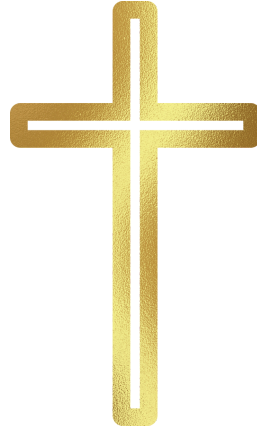
When the girls were done shopping, they told Terry about their encounter with Irene. Later that evening we received a call from Irene's husband, Ron. Ron told Terry that he was one of his patients! He went on to explain that he had been in Kazakhstan for several years and had just returned home with his new wife, Irene, and daughter. We invited them over and had a very enjoyable time.

Two weeks later when Terry made his formal Rotary presentation about the urgent need for ongoing financial support for the Hope Medical Clinic, a brand new member was inducted into the Rotary club that evening...Ron! He attentively listened to Terry's presentation without comment. At the end, Terry asked if there were any questions and Ron stood up to speak.

"I know that I am new here," began Ron, "but I feel that I must say something. I have lived in Kazakhstan for the last several years and my wife Irene is a Kazakhstan physician. So I truly do understand what Dr. Wortz is talking about. However, he's not telling you the whole truth. Perhaps he doesn't fully understand the entire situation yet." Ron paused then exclaimed, "Things are so much worse than Dr. Wortz has shared with you today!"

Right then and there the club decided to adopt the Hope Medical Clinic as their own charitable project. We were able to apply for and were granted approval for a matching fund grant through Rotary International. However, getting that approval wasn't as easy as we had originally thought. In order to get matching funds, a Rotary club in Kazakhstan must co-sponsor the effort. The problem was we couldn't find a Rotary club in Kazakhstan! Rumor had it that there was one Rotary club in the country. It was in the city of Almaty, the capital of Kazakhstan. Through many emails and much effort, every lead we had was exhausted without success. When we had given up hope of finding it, a man named Joel, who was our Missionary Field Director, mentioned our efforts in an email to an American physician, Dr. Marty, who was currently in Kazakhstan. Dr. Marty answered Joel's email explaining that not only did he know where the Rotary club in Almaty was but that he was a member! We had finally found what we were looking for and the matching fund grant through Rotary International was approved. On a side note, Dr. Marty and Terry were the only two American physicians serving as medical missionaries in all of Kazakhstan upon our arrival.

The leader of our Michigan Rotary club was so amazed at all the “coincidences” of our story that he confided to Terry, “I never before believed in fate, but it is obvious that a power of some sort is at work here.” This gave Terry a chance to explain to him what “Power” was at work to make the Hope Medical Clinic a reality!



TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 35:4-7

Thus says the Lord: "Say to those whose hearts are frightened: Be strong, fear not! Here is your God, he comes with vindication; with divine recompense he comes to save you. Then will the eyes of the blind be opened, the ears of the deaf be cleared; then will the lame leap like a stag, then the tongue of the mute will sing. Streams will burst forth in the desert, and rivers in the steppe. The burning sands will become pools, and the thirsty ground, springs of water."

Miracle Prayer

Lord, Jesus, I come before You just as I am.
I am sorry for my sins. I repent of my sins. Please forgive me.
In Your Name I forgive all others for what they have done against me.
I renounce Satan, the evil spirits and all their works.
I give You my entire self, Lord Jesus, now and forever.
I invite You into my life, Jesus. I accept You as my Lord, God and Savior.
Heal me. Change me. Strengthen me in body, soul and spirit.
Come Lord Jesus, cover me with Your Precious Blood and fill me with Your Holy Spirit!
I love You, Jesus! I praise You, Jesus! I thank You, Jesus!
I shall follow You every day of my life.
Amen.

DAY

Four

Our Father who art in Heaven,
hallowed be Thy Name;
Thy Kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Amen.

NEWSLETTER #4

As adventurous as our trip to Kazakhstan was the first time, I soon realized how stressful this second trip was upon our return as long-term medical missionaries. After arriving back in the city of Karaganda, I developed a rash. It was in a place I couldn't see - only feel. After several days of wondering what exactly was my painful problem, I had an idea. I gave Renee my digital camera and asked her to take a close-up. Sure enough, my suspicions were correct. I had shingles.

After the shingles were gone, I developed a terrible case of Athlete's Foot. The day after I put a good dose of antifungal cream on my feet, I started getting the same rash on my hands. I must admit I have never seen a case of Athlete's Hand before so I started questioning my diagnosis. It was when Renee started itching that I realized we had scabies. It was a challenge to wash what we had worn or slept in with hot water because we never knew if we would have running water on the same day or time that we had electricity.

About the time we stopped scratching, we got news that the Hope Medical Clinic had arrived! The clinic itself was donated by a generous couple in memory of Hope, their daughter. Imagine a huge motor home containing examination rooms, a top-notch X-ray machine and a dental chair. The clinic had been shipped once Renee and I made the commitment to come to Kazakhstan. By shipped I mean it was literally "shipped on a slow boat to China." From China it went by railroad to Kazakhstan. When I was notified that the Hope Medical Clinic had arrived, I should have known it wasn't going to be as simple as receiving a phone call saying, "Dr. Wortz, your mobile medical clinic is here. Please come get it at your earliest convenience." And then I would simply head on over to the train station, climb in and drive it away. Remember this is Kazakhstan. Right off the bat, the battery was stolen out of it.

I did receive a call from an employee at the railroad station saying that our cargo had arrived but that we needed to off load it right away! If we didn't, we would be substantially fined for each day it sat there. Our dilemma was that without the battery we couldn't off load it and batteries like that were hard to come by. That's probably why ours was stolen in the first place!

After wondering and praying what our next step should be, I called my translator and our Kazakhstan lawyer that represented the USA missionaries. I asked them to meet me at the train station. Once we were altogether, I asked to see the head of customs for the railroad. We were told he was busy but would get to us when he could. We had quite a long wait but eventually he arrived.

He brought us to his office that was, surprisingly, filled with people. I asked if these people could please leave so the four of us could be alone. I could tell my request made my translator and lawyer nervous. I understood this wasn't the way they did things in Kazakhstan but I was in a real pickle. We owed a lot of penalty money. It was imperative that we communicate without interruptions and distractions so this problem could be solved once and for all.

I proceeded to ask this man if he knew what a mobile medical clinic was and why it was so important for the people of Kazakhstan. He just shrugged his shoulders. He obviously didn't care. The only thing he cared about was getting all the penalty money owed.

Suddenly, the man began to yell and scream at my translator and lawyer! Then, to my surprise, they began screaming back! This went on for a while and then, just as suddenly as it began, the yelling and screaming stopped and the men stood up. They had obviously come to some sort of an agreement. I asked my translator to explain what had just happened. He happily announced that they had gotten a reduction in the amount of penalty money that I owed.

I sighed.

Then I told everyone to sit back down because nothing had been solved.

It was time to pull out the big guns.

Through my translator I explained that the governor of the state (I then told him his name) wanted to be seen with the Hope Medical Clinic on Kazakhstan national television. He was waiting for me to call him after our meeting was concluded.

I then looked at the man in charge of customs straight in the eyes and continued, “I can tell the governor that things are still being worked out (the word they use is “baviet”) or I can tell him that the battery was stolen out of the mobile clinic on your watch and you have given me nothing but grief and monetary penalties because you are looking for a bribe.” I paused and then added, “I’m leaving it up to you what I should tell the governor.”

Without another word, I stood up, grabbed my briefcase and walked out of the office. My translator and lawyer soon came out and were laughing.

Now what?

My translator explained, “Oh, you made him very nervous. Not only is he not charging you any more penalty fees, he is going to give you back the penalty money that you have already paid. That never happens!”

Once again God made a way for us by having an important government official take interest in our mission here in Kazakhstan. Over and over we have seen Him make a way where there didn’t seem to be one.

After that meeting, a battery was then found. I wouldn’t be at all surprised if it was our original battery that “the powers that be” were planning on selling back to us!

So now we had to figure out where in the world we were going to park this thing once we drove it out of the railroad yard. It had already been vandalized once so we needed to find a secure place to keep it until we could get things organized.

I got the bright idea to hire a driver and to just cruise around town to see what we could find. Renee and Joyce agreed to stay back at the apartment and pray that God would lead us to just the right secure place for the Hope Medical Clinic.

So off I went with the driver and my translator. This particular day my translator was a woman named Galina. We drove by a huge place that had many big buildings that looked like garages. I asked what that was and was told it was the Russian military base.

“Great!” I exclaimed. “I want to go in there and talk with the Base Commander.”

I could tell that Galina thought I was crazy. She tried to explain, “We can’t just drive in there and say that you want to talk with the Russian Base Commander! Nobody does that.”

“Well, yes, that’s exactly what I want to do,” I answered.

So the driver turned into the entrance of the military base and was immediately stopped by a guard. The guard asked why we are there and the driver told him an American doctor was in the car and wanted to speak with the Base Commander. The guard then went to make some phone calls and wouldn’t you know it? God’s favor shows up again!

The gate was opened and we were told where to go to meet with the Base Commander. When we reached the spot and got out of the car, I am pretty sure Galina was questioning if she had chosen the right profession.

We walked into the building and were met by a secretary. She asked us our names and then she rang for the Base Commander.

I felt like I was in a movie. Soon he appeared. He was the rank of colonel and he was so happy to see us! He gave me a big hug and then a kiss on both cheeks. So I decided to be jolly too and did the same right back. He introduced himself as “Sergay.”

I said through my translator at the beginning of our conversation that I had always wanted to work for NASA. In hindsight, I think she misunderstood me and told him that I used to work for NASA. Something kind of got lost in the translation there.

Sergay went on to tell us that his main mission in Kazakhstan was to recover the Russian space ships that had landed here. Then he quipped that he and I were both foreigners in Kazakhstan and that we needed to stick together!

He then asked, “What can I do for you?”

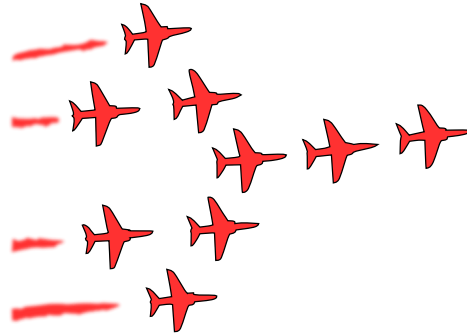
I told him I was a medical missionary doctor. I explained about the Hope Medical Clinic, how valuable it was and that I needed to find a secure place to park it.

After hearing me out he said, “You can bring your clinic to the base and we will guard it with machine guns and police dogs. It will be safe here until you find another place for it.”

Then I asked about all the buildings that were on the base and wondered if they were all being used. He explained there were some that were empty and that he could have his men disassemble one of them and reassemble it wherever I wanted it. That way the mobile clinic would always be protected.

I agreed that would work out perfectly.

Sometimes real life is indeed stranger than fiction. Before I came to Kazakhstan, I never could have imagined in my wildest dreams that the Hope Medical Clinic, with the ultimate goal of evangelizing and bringing people to Jesus Christ, would end up being guarded by the Russian military which had recently been the former Soviet Union!



TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

2 Chronicles 20:6

And Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD before the new court and said, "O LORD God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. In your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand you."

Miracle Prayer

Lord, Jesus, I come before You just as I am.
I am sorry for my sins. I repent of my sins. Please forgive me.
In Your Name I forgive all others for what they have done against me.
I renounce Satan, the evil spirits and all their works.
I give You my entire self, Lord Jesus, now and forever.
I invite You into my life, Jesus. I accept You as my Lord, God and Savior.
Heal me. Change me. Strengthen me in body, soul and spirit.
Come Lord Jesus, cover me with Your Precious Blood and fill me with Your Holy Spirit!
I love You, Jesus! I praise You, Jesus! I thank You, Jesus!
I shall follow You every day of my life.
Amen.

DAY

Five

Our Father who art in Heaven,
hallowed be Thy Name;
Thy Kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Amen.

NEWSLETTER #5

Terry has received many shipping containers filled with medicines and medical equipment from the United States since we arrived here in Kazakhstan. He and his staff identify, organize, and then catalog everything. This takes precious time out of his busy schedule but it must be done.

Our walk-in clinic, as opposed to the Hope Medical Mobile Clinic, is located in the Mikaduke Pediatric Hospital. Yes, they have socialized medicine here in Kazakhstan. That means they “treat you for free.” But here is the million-dollar question: “What exactly does that mean?”

I’ll give you an example of what that means. Let’s say that it was determined that your pain was caused by a sick gall bladder and it needed to be removed. You would then be given a list of all the supplies that you needed to find before your surgery could be done. We would be talking surgical gloves, gowns, sutures, IV fluids, pain medicine, etc. Basically all the things needed for your surgery. Where would you look to buy these supplies? You would start looking at the bazaars, which in reality means the black market. If you have the money and are fortunate enough to locate everything then your gall bladder surgery is “free.” As you might have guessed by now, Terry and I are definitely not advocates of socialized medicine. We found things so broken here that at one point we just wanted to sit down and weep. I didn’t go to work often with Terry but on a day I was there, I witnessed a sweet elderly woman kissing Terry’s hands! She had arthritis and nothing to ease her pain. The reason she was kissing his hands is because she was so thankful to him for giving her the “miracle medicine.” What was this miracle medicine?

Aspirin.

The office they gave Terry to work out of at the hospital was in very bad shape. A few of us Americans went there to caulk the windows because the cold air was coming in through the cracks. We had on our warmest coats, hats and gloves and we still nearly suffered frostbite inside the building. I remember actually crying that day because it was so cold. Being from Michigan, we thought we knew what cold was. However, this was a whole different level of cold.

Terry will continue our story... Remember Joyce? She is the Registered Nurse from Michigan who God used to get us here in the first place.

Joyce came as a medical missionary to Kazakhstan a couple years before we did. At one point, she felt a tug from God to move to a remote place in Kazakhstan where the people were in more desperate need of medical care than in the big city of Karaganda. Let me explain what the city where she lives used to be. It was a “gulag” which is another name for a prison camp. The famous Russian novelist Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn was held in this gulag.

Everyone Stalin didn't like got sent to Kazakhstan. He would order the people he didn't like to be put on trains and then dropped off at the end of the line. The end of the line was Kazakhstan. There were no supplies or decent food. As the old saying goes, it wasn't necessarily the end of the earth but you could see it from there! Joyce took Acts 1:8 to heart, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Joyce pretty much found it. It is a place called Atbazar.

One of Joyce's goals was to find a place to launch one of our ministries called: “CHE.” Depending on what country you were in, it stood for “Christian Health Education” or “Community Health Education.” This program would take simple lessons about healthcare education and apply the Word of God to it. For example, one lesson was about the importance of washing our hands. The scripture for that lesson was Hebrews 10:22: “Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart full in assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.”

One of the most important lessons we learned in our preparation courses before coming to Kazakhstan was: “Listen to the people. They will tell you exactly what they need.” We had to lose the “because we are Americans we know what is best” attitude. Joyce was a shining example of this. After working with the local health officials to find out their greatest need, she discovered it was prenatal care.

It was on a Tuesday that we were off to Atbazar to visit Joyce and see first hand the prenatal work she was doing. Again, we were welcomed with open arms by the local hospital staff and spoke with several physicians about their needs and dreams. We were then directed to a village, Sergavka, where we were told our help was needed. They even provided an ambulance as transportation for our team of five Americans and a translator.

After finding the village and meeting some of 2000 people who called Sergavka their home, I was deeply moved when I found out the story. At one time they did have a physician and a twenty-five-bed hospital in which minor surgery could be performed. However, the physician died and no doctor would come to replace him. Because of this, the health care in this isolated area was provided by a feltcher – kind of like a physician’s assistant. A woman named Einya was this town’s feltcher. Einya admitted that there was no money for a doctor and that the situation was so dire that the government had not paid her for nearly five years! I asked her why she stayed. She simply said that she couldn’t leave because the people needed her and that she loved them.

Einya then took us to see some of her patients in their homes. One was a grandmother who had undiagnosed chest and back pain. She was so pale that I knew she was anemic. Her spleen was also enlarged and I suggested some tests that could be done. My thought was she had Lymphoma.

As I was about to leave, her family gathered around me to hear what I had to say. I explained to them my concern and then I noticed a picture of Jesus above her door. I said, “I wish I could do more to relieve her pain but I am just a man. Would you mind if I prayed that God will do for her what I cannot?”

Immediately her sister exclaimed, “Yes! Please pray! We are believers. We have tried to keep our faith alive but it has been so hard. We thought the whole world had forgotten about us but here you are. You have come all the way from America and you want to pray for us! We are so happy you have found us! We are not alone!”

After praying, the patient’s sister followed us back out to the ambulance. She was crying tears of joy the whole time.

When we got to the ambulance, I noticed that Einya seemed brusque. I wondered if I had offended her by praying with her patient.

I finally asked, “Einya, did I offend you by my prayer? I just needed to offer them something because they were so desperate for hope.”

Tears welled up in Einya's eyes as she answered, "No, you didn't offend me, Dr. Terry. I just did not want to cry in public. I too am a believer in Jesus. My grandparents were brought here in 1941 from Germany against their will. They tried to teach my parents and us children about God but it was so hard. All of my family members are believers but we have no Church and nobody to teach us about Jesus. You cannot know what joy it is to have an American doctor find my village then and pray for us. I just cannot believe that this is really happening in Sergavka!"

That day in that forgotten little village was one of the best days I have had in Kazakhstan. That day made every cold shower, every cold meal, every cold floor and every cold bus ride worth it.

That day cured my homesickness.

And that day made any thoughts of "my big sacrifices" seem... well, silly.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

2 Timothy 1:7-8

For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control. So do not be ashamed of your testimony to our Lord, nor of me, a prisoner for his sake; but bear your share of hardship for the gospel with the strength that comes from God.

Miracle Prayer

Lord, Jesus, I come before You just as I am.

I am sorry for my sins. I repent of my sins. Please forgive me.

In Your Name I forgive all others for what they have done against me.

I renounce Satan, the evil spirits and all their works.

I give You my entire self, Lord Jesus, now and forever.

I invite You into my life, Jesus. I accept You as my Lord, God and Savior.

Heal me. Change me. Strengthen me in body, soul and spirit.

Come Lord Jesus, cover me with Your Precious Blood and fill me with Your Holy Spirit!

I love You, Jesus! I praise You, Jesus! I thank You, Jesus!

I shall follow You every day of my life.

Amen.

DAY

Six

Our Father who art in Heaven,
hallowed be Thy Name;
Thy Kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Amen.

NEWSLETTER #6

The important government official that was interested in our Hope Medical Clinic and had unknowingly rescued me from my railroad woes was the governor for our state. He was so excited about the mobile clinic that he insisted on a tour as soon as we were able to arrange one. He did indeed bring his own press corps and I ended up on Kazakhstan national television!

On our first visit to Kazakhstan we were able to use the car of one of the missionaries on furlough. However, he returned shortly after we did so now we have to “hoof it” wherever we go. I had to ride a public transportation microbus (we would say a van) to the local hospital for children where we have been given space to see patients. It can be between a thirty to forty-five minute microbus ride and then I walk a mile from the bus stop to the hospital.

On this particular day, after settling into a spot in the microbus that was already filled with 10 non-speaking English people, a big truck suddenly pulled right in front of us and stopped. Our driver had to make a quick decision: either T-bone the truck or hit head on traffic!

He chose the truck.

Needless to say, we were all pretty shaken up but nobody was hurt. Everyone just sat there. Quietly. I figured I would just sit quietly too and do what everyone else did since at that point the only thing I could fluently say in Russian is: “I don’t speak Russian.”

As we sat there quietly in the middle of the road, the other traffic just continued to go around us in all the different directions. After about fifteen minutes of sitting quietly, the police finally arrived. They spoke with our driver and soon the whole thing was eventually sorted out to our driver's satisfaction. He proceeded to give each of us back our twenty-five cents and then ordered us off the microbus. Off we went then off we stood, quietly, waiting for another microbus to come pick up us. Eventually it came and the journey continued as if nothing had ever happened.

At this point I remember staring out the window daydreaming... "If I had been injured, would it be considered workman's comp? Is there even such a thing as workman's comp in Kazakhstan?" As I continued my stream of conscientiousness, the microbus driver drove right past my bus stop! Not remembering the Russian word for "stop" I shouted, "Stop! Pazhalsta! Pazhalsta!" ("Pazhulsta!" is Russian for "please!")

That got me a lot of strange looks from my fellow passengers and ended up being totally ineffective because the driver just kept going. He decided to let me off at a bus stop about two miles from the hospital instead of my usual one. When I got off the bus, my heart was saddened when I saw an intoxicated teenager asleep on top of the snow. Unfortunately, this is not an uncommon sight here in Kazakhstan.

I decided the extra mile walk would be good for me as it would let me work out all the kinks that were now developing in my back because of the accident. As I walked, a scene from the movie Dr. Zhavago came to mind. I imagined myself as the poor doctor walking through the ice and snow shouting: "Natasha! Sasha!" But I didn't dare shout because half the people around here are named Natasha or Sasha and I would have had a whole lot of people wondering what in the world I wanted.

Yes, just another day in Kazakhstan and I haven't even gotten to work yet.



It was around this time period that I received a phone call from a father concerning his beautiful twenty-year-old daughter. His daughter's name was Lena and she was dying.

I clearly remember it was 8:30pm on a Saturday night when the call came through. Lena had been perfectly fine up until about a week ago when she developed right hand numbness. She went to the local doctor who told her it was just anxiety due to her university exams and proceeded to give her a tranquilizer. He then sent her on her way. Three days later she had a seizure and was brought to the hospital.

I won't describe what they did to try and diagnose and treat her. What I can say is the next morning she went into a coma and never recovered. Lena's family asked her doctors if the American doctor could come and examine her but they refused to allow it. They now gave their approval when they realized Lena had only hours to live so that is why her father was now calling me.

When I saw Lena, I was again appalled at the condition of this "intensive care unit." Lena was on a drip IV, a ventilator so old we would have thrown it away twenty years ago in the USA, no urinary catheter and no heart monitor. She was completely stripped, yet sharing a room with two male patients.

After examining her, I found no neurological function at all. I asked her doctors what her diagnosis was. I almost hit the ceiling when they told me pneumonia and meningitis! No one in the room wore masks and I had to directly lean over the "exhaust pipe" of her ventilator to examine her, breathing in what she was breathing out.

Lena's father was near me and I had to work hard to push out of my mind the thought: "Thank God my own children are in America in case they get sick."

Lena's father and I then left the room to give the waiting family members the grisly news that Lena would be dead in a matter of hours. At the same time, I was also dealing with my own emotions of frustration and exasperation knowing that I had a CT Scanner that could have saved Lena's life but it was still sitting in a shipping container in Karaganda because we didn't have enough funds to get it up and running.

I didn't cry though I felt like it. I managed a stiff upper lip as I offered Lena's family hope. I explained to them that no doctor could help Lena now but that she was safe in God's hands. Then with Lena's family and the doctors with me, we all went back to where Lena lay. I anointed her with oil and prayed for a miracle.

That would not happen. Lena died before morning.

Lena's family then invited me to their home for tea. I sat with them for a couple hours as they told me about her life. Her father also told me that Lena's mother suffered a heart attack three days earlier, perhaps because of the shock of what was happening to her daughter, and was now in another hospital.

I then shared with them about the struggles I had when my own daughter was in the intensive care unit. We talked together about our pain and then I offered them hope in Jesus Christ and His Resurrection.

They then shared with me that two years earlier Lena decided that she wanted to be baptized. They asked me if that meant she would go to Heaven. Before I tell you what I said, let me explain the situation a little more clearly. Lena would have been eighteen years old, born in a Communist state, taught in school to be an atheist, willing to risk losing social status, future career advancement and accepting possible persecution by deciding to be baptized. I told them that I couldn't imagine that she was not with Jesus.

I haven't seen Lena's family since then but I share a bond of love with them. I hope to see them again. Most of all, I have hope that Lena and I will see each other in Heaven someday. I imagine she will be radiantly beautiful with the glow of everlasting life in her eyes instead of the haunting blank stare of death that I still sometimes see in my dreams.



TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

John 11:35

Jesus wept.

Miracle Prayer

Lord, Jesus, I come before You just as I am.
I am sorry for my sins. I repent of my sins. Please forgive me.
In Your Name I forgive all others for what they have done against me.
I renounce Satan, the evil spirits and all their works.
I give You my entire self, Lord Jesus, now and forever.
I invite You into my life, Jesus. I accept You as my Lord, God and Savior.
Heal me. Change me. Strengthen me in body, soul and spirit.
Come Lord Jesus, cover me with Your Precious Blood and fill me with Your Holy Spirit!
I love You, Jesus! I praise You, Jesus! I thank You, Jesus!
I shall follow You every day of my life.
Amen.

DAY

Seven

Our Father who art in Heaven,
hallowed be Thy Name;
Thy Kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Amen.

NEWSLETTER #7

Terry and his translator are in Atbasar this week. They are assessing the medical needs of the people there. "Terry and his translator" is a phrase that has become familiar to us around here. We were put on "the fast track" in order to get us to Kazakhstan as soon as possible so we didn't have to go through the rigorous language training that most of the missionaries had to complete. The reason for this is because the need for American doctors was so great. They wanted us here ASAP.

As it turned out, not all the translators we used were professionals. Many of the college-age kids who ended up coming to our church in Kazakhstan offered to be our translators. In turn, they wanted us to help them with their English. It was a great solution for me because the Russian language has been a difficult language for me to master. My tongue just doesn't seem to always want to cooperate!

The college kids would often take me around town and show me where the best bazaars were. This is how most of the people of Kazakhstan shopped - at outdoor bazaars. It would be like a Farmers Market except there were many more things besides food for sale.

The bazaar that was considered the very best happened to be right across the street from the high-rise apartment where we lived. The meat market was probably the most surprising for me. It had stations for each kind of meat. If you wanted beef, look for the head of a cow. If you wanted lamb, look for the head of a lamb. If you wanted pork, you guessed it, look for the head of a pig. Why bother with signs when you can advertise the real deal?

Then there were “The Salad Ladies.” These were the women I had given that nickname who came from all different ethnic backgrounds including Korean, German, and Chinese. They brought to the market unique recipes that had been in their families for generations. It was kind of like a huge international deli. Some of the dishes I really enjoyed right off the bat and others took my taste buds a little more time to adjust and appreciate.

I was careful to never buy too many things at once because I had to carry it all up six flights of stairs. Actually, it was more like twelve flights since each flight had a double set of steps. We did have an elevator but it didn’t work. We assumed that if it were an easy fix, it would have been fixed. However, when we finally got around to investigating the problem, we were shocked to find that there was family living in the elevator shaft! They eventually were removed from this dangerous situation. Then it cost about \$200 to put the elevator back to operating order. Believe me, it was money well spent. Especially when I think about the first day we arrived here. We had to carry our luggage and those fifty plus boxes of medical supplies up the stairs to our apartment. Most of the boxes had no other place to go until they could be safely distributed to the right people so up they went with us. That night Terry discovered he had gotten a hernia from all the lifting.

That reminds me of a story that happened some months back that I haven’t had a chance to share with you. I have known for quite awhile that one of my God-given gifts was the gift of hospitality. I wasn’t sure how God would use that gift on the mission field but I knew He always surprises us when we surrender everything to Him.

After being in Karaganda for a while now and meeting some very interesting people, I decided it was time to host a dinner party in our apartment. Terry, Joyce and I put our heads together and ended up inviting 22 people to the party.

The three of us had a good time deciding on the menu. The day of the dinner party, we went together to the bazaar across the street to buy all the food. Now when you think about buying groceries for such an event in the United States, it is not that big of a deal. However, here in Karaganda, it is not so easy.

First we needed to find the meat. As I mentioned early, we found the meat by looking up to see what kind of animal head (a real one) was hanging above that merchant’s area. Next we needed to hunt for the various kinds of vegetables. This being Kazakhstan, potatoes were on the menu. Bread is also essential. To our delight, we were able to find several types of delicious bread at the market. Fizzy water is considered a treat along with Coca-cola (yes, it’s everywhere). We also searched for fruits and nuts. We would have bought chocolate and wine but those are the two things that people usually bring if they can afford to when they are invited to someone’s home for a meal in Kazakhstan.

Remembering that everything had to be carried up 6 flights of stairs (this was before the elevator was fixed), we had to decide if the item was really necessary before we bought it. When we finally had everything we needed, the three of us had heavy loads to carry! We made it up to the apartment only to discover that the electricity was off. This wasn't really a big surprise since we often woke up to no electricity or running water. We had actually become very good at contingency planning, better known as: Plan B. I'd have to say that Terry has become the master of figuring out Plan B's. He began calling our other missionary team members who lived in other parts of the city to ask if they had electricity. The plan was to prep everything in our apartment, hire a taxi to take the food to an apartment with electricity so it could be cooked on their stove or baked in their oven and then the taxi would bring it back to our apartment. I know. It sounds complicated. But this is Kazakhstan.

Terry began peeling potatoes, Joyce was preparing the meat and I was taking care of the other numerous details for this party. It was at that point that Terry said, "You know. We haven't asked God to intervene in this situation yet."

So we put the brakes on all our activities, joined hands in our kitchen and began to ask God for help. We finished with "Amen!" and then waited. Nothing happened. And I said as much to Terry and Joyce. Terry replied, "Well, Renee, nothing has happened yet because the last potato hasn't been peeled!"

We all had a good laugh and continued the meal preparation. We were trying to figure out the timing of everything: coordinating the food that needed to be cooked and taxied back to us in time for the arrival of our guests. We found things to be thankful for and made a lot of jokes as we enjoyed our time together prepping the food.

Finally, with great ceremony, Terry held up the very last peeled potato for Joyce and I to see. Then he sat down.

And as if God Himself threw the switch, the electricity came on.

You would have thought there was a riot breaking out. We started jumping up and down, running around the apartment and praising God for His faithfulness!

The electricity stayed on until all the food was cooked and was ready to be served.

And then it went back off.

We all enjoyed a wonderful dinner by candlelight.

Now back to my original story! While Terry has been away to Atbasar this week, I was asked to meet with some men from the United States involved in international adoptions. I went ahead and agreed because I knew it would help me better understand how the system around here works. We have been in meetings with either orphanage workers or government officials and it has been a real eye-opener.

From what I have observed so far, the child up for adoption is like a pawn in a game. Whoever pays the most money wins the game.

We stayed clear of having much to do with the adoption process because, even though there were many children who desperately needed good homes, this is not the reason why Terry and I came to Kazakhstan.

Over the years we have learned that one of Satan's tricks is to get a person very busy doing many good things and then they miss or poorly do the most important task the Lord had wanted them to do. It takes prayer and discernment to know what is "the one thing necessary."

We loved the orphaned Kazakhstan children and our hearts were deeply touched concerning their difficult situation. There were seventeen orphaned babies dropped off at the children's hospital when we first arrived here. Talk about being hit with the stark reality of this place! We found out it wasn't because these babies didn't have families. They did. It was because their parents were so desperately poor that they didn't have money to feed and care for them. So out of necessity they surrendered them to the state. Their reasoning was at least their child would have a chance of survival.

When our daughter's church back home heard about the orphaned babies, they organized an amazing fund-raiser and ended up sending us all kinds of needed supplies. They shipped us huge boxes of warm clothes, diapers and even a rocking chair. From the way the people here reacted, I don't think they had ever seen a rocking chair before. Every doctor and nurse took turns rocking the babies. It was beautiful to watch.

Overall the orphanages are decently clean. I would say they do their best with the resources available to them. I would also say they still need a lot of help.

Over time we have received big shipping containers filled with humanitarian aid for the children and it is often my job to figure out where these things should go. We have a pretty big team in Karaganda so when a container arrives whoever is available to help comes and helps sort.

I remember one time we received a huge container filled with hundreds! of children's shoes, boots, winter coats, hats and mittens. I doubt that the people who sent this fully understood what a tremendous blessing it was for the children. What we often take for granted can be a matter of life and death here. What I mean by that is the actual temperatures go as low as 40 below zero. Although no one usually ventures outside in those temperatures unless it is absolutely necessary, you get the picture.

Currently we have churches from all across America sending us necessities for the children of Kazakhstan. We are humbled when we think how we are the hands and feet of Jesus when we help these innocent children. Scripture that says it is better to give than receive and we have experienced that truth up close. Terry and I gave up a six-figure income when the Lord called us to be missionaries. Here in Kazakhstan we make \$550 a month and live like kings and queens. Is it because everything is so much cheaper here? No. It is because our whole attitude about the things of this world has changed. The Lord has helped us to be more interested in investing in people's lives than investing in "acquiring more stuff."

Recently I was part of a meeting with the vice-mayor here in Karaganda. He was a man who seemed to have a genuine concern for his people. He told us that if we would set up a shelter for the street kids, he would provide us with a building and also pay for all the utilities. This was no small offer since the utilities alone would cost about five to six thousand dollars a month. I felt pretty positive about the meeting not to mention the fact that he took my hand and kissed it when I left. That will teach Terry to go out of town without me!



I have been trying to fix up our apartment as quickly as possible but I'm learning nothing happens fast around here. It seems like when I start to get things in order, another problem promptly presents itself. For example, our new water heater sprung another leak today so I had to call the repairman again. I think I'm a nightmare to him.

He finally arrived and immediately began working on the water heater. No need to tell him where to go as he and our water heater have become familiar friends. At the same time I got busy working on this newsletter. Suddenly, I heard a strange noise. I looked up and saw water pouring out of the ceiling! I knew the repairman wasn't causing this since he was in the next room so I screamed, "Eurry!" (I'm not saying hurry! His name is "Eurry." But I want him to hurry!)

In ran Eurry. He took one look at the water pouring out of the ceiling and said something that sounded to me like, "Ppqlaipvuiorewjfkfjimmkkxphjnbhgfertcbhzzqfmmikei!"

Then he took off running.

I went and found some towels but then decided to just wait to see what would happen next. A few minutes later the water stopped flowing and before I knew it Eurry was back. He spoke about as much English as I do Russian. I'll try my best to translate what I think he said.

Eurry: "A lady upstairs ran too much water in her sink. "

Me: "Okay."

Eurry: "The water overflowed."

Me: "Okay."

Eurry: "And the extra water came down on your head."

Me: "Thank you for stopping it."

Eurry: "Okay."

Then Eurry went back to try and fix the water heater.

Again.

Just another day in Kazakhstan.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Matthew 25:31-40

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?" The King will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

Miracle Prayer

Lord, Jesus, I come before You just as I am.

I am sorry for my sins. I repent of my sins. Please forgive me.

In Your Name I forgive all others for what they have done against me.

I renounce Satan, the evil spirits and all their works.

I give You my entire self, Lord Jesus, now and forever.

I invite You into my life, Jesus. I accept You as my Lord, God and Savior.

Heal me. Change me. Strengthen me in body, soul and spirit.

Come Lord Jesus, cover me with Your Precious Blood and fill me with Your Holy Spirit!

I love You, Jesus! I praise You, Jesus! I thank You, Jesus!

I shall follow You every day of my life.

Amen.

DAY

Eight

Our Father who art in Heaven,
hallowed be Thy Name;
Thy Kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Amen.

NEWSLETTER #8

I have yet to give you a description of our fair city Karaganda. Let me do that now so you get a little better idea of where we live.

Karaganda was established by the Soviets as an administrative headquarters for the concentration camps that Stalin had set up in the area to mine coal. The famous Soviet dissident Alexander Solzhenitsyn was interred in one of these camps. If you want to know what his life was like, read the short story he wrote: *One Day In the Life of Ivan Denisovich*.

The city of Karaganda gets electricity through coal-fired boilers. Coal-fired plants produce electricity by burning coal in a boiler to produce steam. Under tremendous pressure, the steam is produced and it flows into a turbine which spins a generator to create electricity. The steam is then cooled, condensed back into water and returned to the boiler to start the process all over again.

The hot water from this boiler plant is used to heat many buildings in the city. The hot water is pumped through six feet tall asbestos covered pipes that run overhead to every building in the city. It's definitely not the prettiest sight in town.

Our clinic is housed in a pediatric hospital in a poor section of town called Mikaduke. (Yes, even in Kazakhstan there is a class hierarchy.) On the way to the clinic, I get to see many of the 600 feet + slag heaps left by Alexander Solzhenitsyn and his fellow slaves as they toiled in the coal mines for the Soviet state.

Last Sunday was Easter Sunday. We woke up that day to what appeared to be a Christmas morning but this week it is starting to get a little warmer here so perhaps we will be getting some “Easter-like” weather after all.

Recently we had no power during our church service. We all gathered together and then entered the pitch-black theater that we rent using our flashlights. We then heard a wonderful sermon that day on how we are the light of the world. Try that in America. Try getting over two hundred mostly young people to sit quietly in a cold, dark theater for over an hour to listen to a sermon.

Incidentally, the theater we rent to meet in is called “The Lenin Theater.” It was named after the founder of Russian communism and former Premier of the Soviet Union, Vladimir Lenin. Each time we go there to freely worship the one true God that Lenin claimed doesn’t exist, I marvel at the irony. There is a statue of Lenin in the front of the theater. The last time we were there I noticed someone had put a Bible in his hand.

One of the first nationals that we met was a young woman named Svetlana who acted as our translator. (Svetlana spoke about five languages.) We found out that before becoming our translator, she had worked for the KGB. Svetlana explained that when you work for the KGB you are required to take “atheism classes.” She was given a book that on one side explained how there is no God, the atheistic view, and on the other side were Bible verses with twisted explanations that refuted the existence of God. Svetlana reasoned that if the KGB authorities were trying that hard to refute the Bible then maybe she should take the time to read it through for herself.

So she did.

The Holy Spirit made those words on the pages of the Bible come alive for Svetlana! She gave her heart to Jesus after reading it and ended up becoming a powerful witness for the Lord. As a matter of fact, there was a time she was still working for the KGB after the fall of the Soviet Union (years of transition) that she met some of the first American missionaries that had come to Kazakhstan. These missionaries invited her to come visit the United States. Svetlana’s supervisor told her that she could go if she would agree to gather some information for him – in other words to spy. She declined. Then he told her she would never get approved to go to the USA. Svetlana boldly faced him and exclaimed, “If Jesus wants me to go to the United States, then no one will stop me!”

To everyone’s amazement, her request was approved.

Earlier I wrote about visiting Joyce, our American friend and medical missionary nurse, in Atbazar. While in Atbazar for the first time, I had a chance to meet Yerlan, a ten year-old Kazak boy who was a diabetic. To control his sugar, he was taking five injections of insulin a day. That is a lot of insulin for such a young boy. The poor boy's entire life revolved around his insulin injections.

His mother heard that an American doctor was coming to town and wanted me to see her son. After hearing his story and examining him, I determined it was safe to try and change him to two injections a day because I had a blood sugar testing machine that I could loan the family. They were a Muslim family and I asked if this Christian doctor could pray with their son before they left.

“Of course!” was their answer.

I kept in contact with Yerlan's family by phone. Soon the boy was able to reduce his injections to just one a day.

I recently had a chance to go back to Atbazar and see Yerlan again. Not only was he doing well on only one shot a day, his sugar was so low that his mother could reduce his insulin amount even more. I then was able to stop his insulin shots completely and his sugar has been normal every day since.

Before we left to come home to Karaganda (did I just call Karaganda home?) I met Yerlan's grandfather. As he tried to thank me for curing his little grandson, I told him that I had not cured Yerlan and I didn't know why his sugars were now normal. I also told him that it was too early to call it a miracle but that we should thank God because no man made this happen.

“If it is a miracle, then we should thank and praise Jesus because I prayed for your little grandson in His Name,” I explained.

He then exclaimed, “Praise God! It's a miracle! It's a miracle! It's a miracle!”



Joyce went back to Sergavka last week. Someone had started a rumor that I would be with her and she later told us the clinic was completely packed with sick people hoping to see the American doctor. Joyce had a chance to speak with Einya. Remember Einya? She is the town's feltcher who had said what joy it was to have an American doctor come to her village and pray. Einya said to Joyce, "Some of us have been talking about asking the Akim (mayor) if we can use an empty building. Ever since you came with Dr. Terry and the team last time, the idea won't leave us that we must have a church!"

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Acts 3:1-10

Now Peter and John were going up to the temple area for the three o'clock hour of prayer. And a man crippled from birth was carried and placed at the gate of the temple called "the Beautiful Gate" every day to beg for alms from the people who entered the temple. When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked for alms. But Peter looked intently at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." He paid attention to them, expecting to receive something from them. Peter said, "I have neither silver nor gold, but what I do have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean, (rise and) walk." Then Peter took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles grew strong. He leaped up, stood, and walked around, and went into the temple with them, walking and jumping and praising God. When all the people saw him walking and praising God, they recognized him as the one who used to sit begging at the Beautiful Gate of the temple and they were filled with amazement and astonishment at what had happened to him.

Miracle Prayer

Lord, Jesus, I come before You just as I am.

I am sorry for my sins. I repent of my sins. Please forgive me.

In Your Name I forgive all others for what they have done against me.

I renounce Satan, the evil spirits and all their works.

I give You my entire self, Lord Jesus, now and forever.

I invite You into my life, Jesus. I accept You as my Lord, God and Savior.

Heal me. Change me. Strengthen me in body, soul and spirit.

Come Lord Jesus, cover me with Your Precious Blood and fill me with Your Holy Spirit!

I love You, Jesus! I praise You, Jesus! I thank You, Jesus!

I shall follow You every day of my life.

Amen.

DAY

Nine

Our Father who art in Heaven,
hallowed be Thy Name;
Thy Kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Amen.

NEWSLETTER #9

News from Renee...

We have now had a chance to visit two of the orphanages here. This is exciting news since we have started delivering some of things we brought. Our daughter Libby's church donated 500 pounds of baby clothes and we were able to take some of the most beautiful items from that batch to six abandoned babies at the Mikaduke Hospital.

I am not exaggerating when I say that every time I go into the room where we store the children's items, it seems like there are more items than before. I think God is multiplying them!

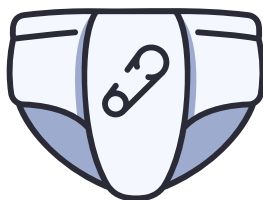
One day we took five huge boxes of clothing to each of the two orphanages. We were told that the day we picked to deliver the items was a holiday. The Kazakhstan people seem to have more holidays than any place we know! We did a little research and found out it was actually a Muslim holiday. This particular day is for giving and receiving forgiveness. I thought this would be an excellent opening to start a new friendship with the staff in the orphanages so I decided to incorporate the idea of giving and receiving into my introduction. I have a wonderful translator that travels with me to help with communicating.

The first orphanage we went to was one that took care of babies. The woman in charge took us to her office and then eagerly asked what kinds of items we had brought with us. I told her a lot of baby clothing and some brand new diapers. To my surprise, she immediately started to cry!

She then went on to explain that they didn't have any heat or telephone service that day because they had run out of money to pay their bills. It was government funding that ran the orphanages. She said they couldn't do laundry because they had no heat. This morning they had prayed that someone would bring them clean diapers and here I was answering that prayer!

I told the translator to tell her that God had heard their prayers and that all the glory goes to the Lord. She lifted her hands, looked up towards Heaven and smiled. Then she told me they also had no money to buy more baby formula so I took out what I had and gave it to her. She cried even more!

The next orphanage we visited was one for pre-school age children. Now I'm not sure what kind of experiences this particular orphanage has had in the past with foreign visitors but I definitely got the feeling they did not trust Americans. I think promises had been made that were not kept. So I began by saying that I know this is a holiday and I wasn't sure if they celebrated it but I think that it is a good holiday. I said that I brought these items for the children as a token of God's love. I then asked forgiveness for any Americans or any Christian who may have offended them in any way. I told them I was hoping to start a brand new friendship with the orphanage. Well, that must have struck something in the woman in charge because she immediately started to cry. It seemed like that was my job that day: to make these women cry! The woman in charge said she did accept my apology and that we were most welcome to come visit the orphanage anytime we wanted to come.



Then two days later another wonderful thing happened. Terry met with the Minister of Health for Karaganda Oblast (state) to sign an agreement between the Mikaduke Hospital and our Friendship Corp. The Minister said he did not want this agreement to limit us in any way and he encouraged us to get our child advocacy efforts up and running. He then recommended two orphanages in particular that needed our help. Can you guess which two? Out of the many in their country he picked the two that we had just visited! The translator that was with Terry was also the translator that had been with me the day we visited the orphanages. She nearly fell out of her chair! She exclaimed, "Dr. Terry! Can I tell him about your wife?" Terry said to go ahead and she explained to the Minister that we had just been to these two orphanages and had delivered some things that they very much needed. Needless to say he was thrilled!

News from Terry:

Some time ago I made a house call to examine the mother of a woman named Kalimash.

As I entered the apartment, I took one look at Kalimash's mother and knew before examining her that she was dying.

After the examination I confirmed the bad news: she was indeed dying of cancer and she was also suffering from heart failure.

I then shared the good news of the Gospel with the sick woman. Immediately she accepted Jesus as her Lord and Savior! I then asked her if I could pray for her. I told her I wanted to ask Jesus to heal her and she agreed.

Afterwards, I found out that Kalimash had been telling her mother about Jesus and praying for her for five long years! I was filled with joy to have been a part of answered prayers.

Six months later I received a phone call from Kalimash.

"Dr. Terry, I want you to come and see my mother again."

I was dumbfounded. I couldn't believe that her eighty-year-old mother who had been near death from terminal cancer and heart failure six months ago was still alive.

"Of course, Kalimash," I replied. "I will come. But there is nothing I can do to help her at this point."

"Just come and see," she said.

On the way there I started to grumble, "Lord, I don't think I want to be around a person dying of cancer today. You know how hard it is for me to watch a cancer patient die. The smell of cancer, the look in their eyes... please, Lord, give me the strength to do this again."

As I stepped into the apartment, even though my glasses were steamed over from coming out of the cold Karaganda winter air, I could see enough to send me into a state of shock. The woman who greeted me walked with a bounce in her step. Her complexion was rosy. She was a perfect weight. She didn't look eighty. She looked more like sixty.

She gave me a big smile and then threw back her head and laughed. Then she threw her arms around me and gave me a big, strong hug!

I just stood in the doorway. I was completely stunned.

I made my way into the apartment and eventually found my voice and asked, “Tell me what happened,”

She explained after her acceptance of Jesus and after I prayed and asked Jesus to heal her, she began to feel stronger. It continued after I left. She just kept getting better.

She welcomed my request to examine her again. I saw that the edema from her feet to her knees was completely gone. As I palpated her abdomen, the huge tumor and the enlargement of her liver was also gone. Her liver no longer felt rock hard and full of cancer. It was now a normal, soft feeling. I asked her what she thought had happened. She replied, “It’s a miracle. Before when you came to see me, I was a dead woman. I was planning my funeral. I had no idea how my family was going to pay for my funeral since all of my money had been spent on doctors. But now look at me!”

I asked her what medications she had been taking and she said only some vitamins. Then I told her, “I wish I could write back home to the United States and tell them I’m such a great missionary doctor that now I cure cancer!” Then I paused and said, “But we both know the truth, don’t we? Jesus has healed you!”

She broke out in a boisterous laugh and exclaimed, “I never knew you had such a good sense of humor! Every time I saw you before you were so serious. I guess it was because I was in such bad shape. It’s good to know I have a happy doctor now!”

I shouldn’t be surprised when I pray for a miracle and God hears and it happens.

I shouldn’t still be surprised.

But I am.

God has moved so powerfully in so many ways since Renee and I have come to Kazakhstan. I am so thankful! He has changed my life and is allowing me to have a small part in His BIG plan.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Mark 7:31-37

Again Jesus left the district of Tyre and went by way of Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, into the district of the Decapolis. And people brought to him a deaf man who had a speech impediment and begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him off by himself away from the crowd. He put his finger into the man's ears and, spitting, touched his tongue; then he looked up to heaven and groaned, and said to him, "Ephphatha!" – that is, "Be opened!" – and immediately the man's ears were opened, his speech impediment was removed, and he spoke plainly. He ordered them not to tell anyone. But the more he ordered them not to, the more they proclaimed it. They were exceedingly astonished and they said, "He does all things well. He makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

Miracle Prayer

Lord, Jesus, I come before You just as I am.

I am sorry for my sins. I repent of my sins. Please forgive me.

In Your Name I forgive all others for what they have done against me.

I renounce Satan, the evil spirits and all their works.

I give You my entire self, Lord Jesus, now and forever.

I invite You into my life, Jesus. I accept You as my Lord, God and Savior.

Heal me. Change me. Strengthen me in body, soul and spirit.

Come Lord Jesus, cover me with Your Precious Blood and fill me with Your Holy Spirit!

I love You, Jesus! I praise You, Jesus! I thank You, Jesus!

I shall follow You every day of my life.

Amen.

DAY

Ten

Our Father who art in Heaven,
hallowed be Thy Name;
Thy Kingdom come.
Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
Amen.

Newsletter #10

Two weeks ago I again visited Atbasar and Sergavka to see patients. Wednesday evening there was a “home church” gathering in Joyce and Sveitlana’s apartment. It was wall-to-wall people in that tiny living room. I counted 19 altogether. I know that there are over 30 believers who comprise the Atbasar church gathering so if they all would have come we might have seen people falling out of windows!

The next morning when our team arrived at the clinic, we were greeted warmly by Einya, the feltcher, and given our schedule for the day. The plan was to make three home visits and then have lunch with Yerlan’s family. Remember Yerlan? He’s the little boy with diabetes that was able to go off his insulin shots. Then after lunch there were ten patients scheduled back at the clinic.

We were surprised when the Akim (the Mayor) came to talk with us. He said he was giving us permission to use an empty building in his town for our church.

After we picked ourselves up off the floor, we explained that we are happy to have our meetings in homes for now. It would take money to renovate the empty building and that would all happen in the right timing. He seemed rather agitated with this answer and went on to explain that he was very concerned about the hazards of large groups gathering in homes. He was convinced that many of the villagers would come to church to worship. By the time the Akim was done showing us how small our faith was, the clinic was now filled with patients! News had traveled that “the American doctor” was back in town so the people just showed up. Einya asked if I would mind seeing these clinic patients first before going on our home visits and I agreed.

One of the men I saw had hypertension. In all my years of doctoring I have never heard the explanation he gave me of why his blood pressure was so high. He said it was elevated because he was very upset that his horse had been stolen AND was afraid that someone had eaten it.

Over three hours later we were able to tear ourselves away from the clinic to make it to Yerlan's house in time for lunch. Yerlan's mother told us that Yerlan's blood sugar was still perfect and proudly designated me his Godfather. On a side note, she served us a traditional Kazak meal called Bishparmach. Bishparmach is made with horsemeat.

No, I didn't ask where the horse came from.



Here is what Nurse Joyce told us about her experiences that day:

We saw four more women after that in their early forty's but they looked to be in their late fifty's or sixty's by American standards.

We saw a man totally blind from cataracts. This could have been easily remedied back in America with outpatient surgery.

Then we saw a woman with a probable aortic aneurysm...

Again and again we met people that had physical problems that we were unable to medically help them with. However, over and over they welcomed our prayers and were so very grateful when we prayed with them. Our team received our daily quota of hugs that day!"

Then Joyce continued, "There was an elderly woman who had waited a long time to see us. When we finally got to her, I noticed that she had been crying. She told us, with tears streaming again down her face, that she was actually there to ask our help on behalf of her daughter.

Dr. Terry and some of our team were able to go to her daughter's tiny home to see the situation. We found her daughter, the daughter's husband, and their thirteen-year-old daughter in a sad state. What we discovered was a woman who was a raging alcoholic. She had been drinking out of control for two years.

Dr. Terry explained to the family that alcoholism is more than a physical disease. It is also a spiritual problem. He told them he had absolutely no medicine to offer her that would cure her and that from a medical doctor's point of view it was HOPELESS.

There was a long, dead silence in the room.

Then he went on to say that there WAS Someone that could help and that His name is JESUS. Our team, Sveta and Victor in particular, ministered to the family and prayed with them for a long time.

Finally, right before we left, the woman decided to bring the giant vodka bottle that sat in the middle of their living room to the back porch and we watched her smash it with a hammer."



Here is another story I would like to share with you from Renee. On that same day Joyce also saw a widow with six children and two grandchildren. Her oldest daughter, the young mother of the two grandchildren, is also a widow. One of these children is a beautiful down-syndrome baby. This family of nine had a very rough winter as they had little money and were always cold and hungry.

Joyce had asked Renee if she wanted to go with her and visit this family and Renee agreed. She said it was a very cold but sunny day. She's never gotten over the fact that it is so cold here but the sun shines so brightly. In Michigan much of our weather is mixed with darkness and clouds in the winter. I guess God has hung the sun here to brighten things up and for that we are grateful.

This was not her first visit to Sergavika but it was still hard to not think that she and Joyce had time traveled back a hundred years. There are no cars and if one does happen to come to town it's a really big deal. Instead, there are sounds of horse hooves clumping down the dirt roads. Children here play kick-the-can just like children do in all parts of the world. Let's face it, little boys of the world will usually make guns out of sticks. A little girl will dress up a cat or dog and call it her baby. That seems to be universal. Children will often use their imaginations to go to other places in their minds to escape the harsh reality of the real world they find themselves in.

Joyce and Renee ventured to this widow's home and what they saw was shocking. It was a tiny, ice-cold house and the children were running around with bare feet. The woman invited them in and asked if they would stay for tea. Renee whispered to Joyce, "I can't take tea or anything else from this woman. It's probably all she has". Joyce explained to Renee that it would be very rude and insulting if they didn't accept her invitation.

The woman proceeded to bring out her two teapots - one with the steeped tea and the other with hot water. Then she placed two teacups on the coffee table. They were chipped and stained but clean. The coffee table was a fairly big table. It was in the middle of their living room and low to the floor. The women sat on the floor around the table.

Then the woman got up and brought to the table one dry biscuit. She very carefully cut it in half. She then gave one half to Joyce and the other half to Renee.

Renee said at that moment she remembered the Gospel story of the widow's mite. Jesus tells about a widow who has very little but gives all she has.

Renee admitted that at that point she couldn't wait to leave this house so I could have a good cry. Out of all the difficult things we had experienced in Kazakhstan, this visit with this widow was one of the hardest things the Lord had led her to do.

Later she and Joyce returned and were able to bring an abundance of food to this woman and her family. The woman was truly shocked that they would care enough to return and help her in such a generous way. She had spent her entire life eking out an existence and their gift to her was more than she could have ever have hoped or imagined. Jesus loves to show up in unexpected places and use imperfect people like us to do what has not been done before.



Last Sunday the first church service was held in Sergavka and Yerlan's mother, the alcoholic family and the poor widow were among those who attended. The next day Joyce and Sveta went back into town and were greeted warmly by many of the people. Several women asked them if there was going to be another church service the following Sunday as they were unable to come the day before. Joyce said she almost cried when one of the women sheepishly confessed to her, "I wanted to come yesterday but I'm a big sinner. I wasn't sure if I would be allowed to come in."

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

James 2:1-5

My brothers and sisters, show no partiality as you adhere to the faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ. For if a man with gold rings and fine clothes comes into your assembly, and a poor person in shabby clothes also comes in, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say, "Sit here, please," while you say to the poor one, "Stand there," or "Sit at my feet," have you not made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil designs? Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Did not God choose those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom that he promised to those who love him?

Miracle Prayer

Lord, Jesus, I come before You just as I am.

I am sorry for my sins. I repent of my sins. Please forgive me.

In Your Name I forgive all others for what they have done against me.

I renounce Satan, the evil spirits and all their works.

I give You my entire self, Lord Jesus, now and forever.

I invite You into my life, Jesus. I accept You as my Lord, God and Savior.

Heal me. Change me. Strengthen me in body, soul and spirit.

Come Lord Jesus, cover me with Your Precious Blood and fill me with Your Holy Spirit!

I love You, Jesus! I praise You, Jesus! I thank You, Jesus!

I shall follow You every day of my life.

Amen.

DAY

Eleven

Our Father who art in Heaven,
hallowed be Thy Name;
Thy Kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Amen.

Newsletter #11

I received a call this past month from Tracy, another American missionary. Tracy works as a teacher at the Kazak American English School. She called to tell me about a student in her class named Leda who is fifteen years old and dying of cancer. Leda had Chemotherapy, surgery and now she had been sent home from the hospital to die.

Tracy explained, “Leda is asking questions about God and her family doesn’t know how to answer her. They have asked me if I would come to their house and talk with her. Terry, would you come with me? I’ve never had one of my students die before and I figured you’re probably used to doing this.”

I felt a lump rising to my throat as I listened to Tracy. I prayed, “Lord, people think it’s easy for me to minister to dying people because I’m a doctor. You know this isn’t true.”

Then I calmly said, “Of course, I’ll talk with her. Tell me the address and when you want me to be there.”

The Lord then convicted me to fast and pray for Leda after talking with Tracy as I continued to be reminded of my own inadequacies.

The day soon came for me to visit with Leda. Tracy was already at Leda’s bedside when I arrived. No matter how many terminally ill patients I meet, I am never fully prepared for the shock of seeing just how thin a person can become and still be alive. What the cancer had not stolen from Leda, the Chemo had. A photo hanging on the wall of a healthy Leda was a cruel reminder of just how beautiful and full of life she had once been. Many members of her family were also in the room with us.

Honestly, I felt like I was at a funeral but the corpse was still alive.

It is the custom here for the doctors not to tell their terminally ill patients that they are dying. They don't want them to lose hope. The same silence can be true for family members. So out of respect for their culture, I asked Leda's mother what I was allowed to talk about with Leda. She whisked me away to another room where I met Leda's uncle. He was the acting head of the family. This man firmly instructed me not to tell Leda that she is dying. I pondered how I could help Leda and still honor what her uncle asked of me. I then went on to explain to him, "I am not here to take away Leda's hope but I have come to offer her hope. I am a Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ. I want Leda to have assurance that life does not end with death. Jesus came to offer hope, both for healing here on earth and then our ultimate healing in Heaven with Him."

I continued, "I have a daughter named Elizabeth. I have been thinking how terrible it would be if she were dying without hope. Well, Leda is dying. I don't want her to die without hope."

I paused and looked right into his eyes, "I have been praying and fasting for the past three days for Leda. I am asking God to help me know what to say to her so she will have hope. Will you be with me as I talk with her about God so that if I say anything that troubles you, you can stop me?"

Leda's uncle, mother and a few others who heard me were amazed that a stranger from a far away land would have this much love for Leda. I shared with them that God loves Leda so much that He sent His Son to be her Savior by dying on a cross for her. Then I asked them, "If God did this for Leda, is it any wonder that He could put His love for Leda into my heart?"

Leda's uncle then said, "I will not worry that a man who loves Leda this much without ever meeting her would offend me. Let us go to her now."

Leda's room was full of relatives as I introduced myself to her and asked what questions she had about God. She stared at me without answering. Finally she said to her family, "I want to talk to this man about God alone." Her uncle immediately got up and made everyone leave the room. Then her questions began.

"Why does God not answer me when I pray?" she cried. "I pray in Kazak, in Russian, in English, and He still doesn't seem to hear me. Why am I so sick? What have I done? Why doesn't God give this sickness to robbers and criminals instead of me?"

I explained to Leda that God had heard her prayers and that's why He had me come. God wants her to know that He loves her. God wants her to know that life goes on beyond the grave and that she can have a peace and joy in her heart that many people will never find who don't know Him. Her cancer was not a punishment. God wants her to understand that if she finds Him through this trial, that whether she lives just a few more days or for many more years, she would have lived a life with true meaning. Then she asked how she could know God like I knew Him. So I told her all about the good news of Jesus and then we prayed together.

When I called the family back in, Leda was beaming. I then asked all of them to pray with me for Leda's healing as I anointed her with oil according to James 5:14. Leda's uncle then asked to talk with me before I left. He said, "I don't know how you did it but Leda seems more alive now than she has been in a very long time. Please answer this question for me. I have been told that Leda's cancer is a punishment from God for something bad that one of her family members did. Is this true?"

I explained, "God is not a big bully just waiting for someone to sin so He can punish them. God is a loving Father. He is constantly reaching out to us in love. It is we who try and punish God by our hatred towards one and another and our insistence on rejecting Him and His ways."

I left them a Bible that Leda's mother read to her daily until the day she was healed. Yes, Leda was healed on the day that she died. Leda died with a heart full of hope since she had accepted Jesus as her Savior and would now spend all eternity with Him completely healed.

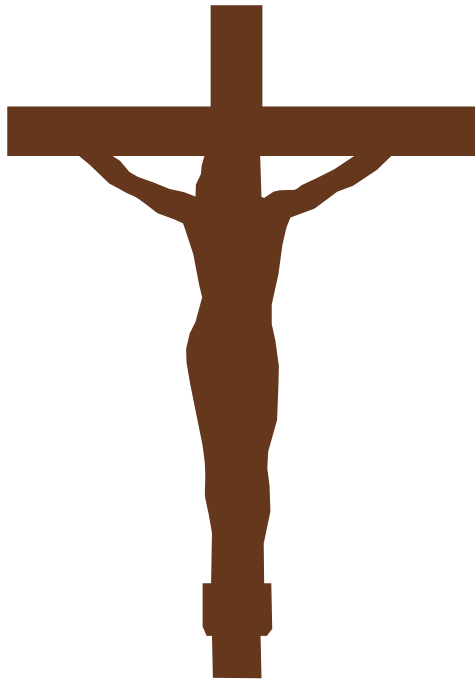
TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Revelation 21:1-5

Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

Miracle Prayer

Lord, Jesus, I come before You just as I am.
I am sorry for my sins. I repent of my sins. Please forgive me.
In Your Name I forgive all others for what they have done against me.
I renounce Satan, the evil spirits and all their works.
I give You my entire self, Lord Jesus, now and forever.
I invite You into my life, Jesus. I accept You as my Lord, God and Savior.
Heal me. Change me. Strengthen me in body, soul and spirit.
Come Lord Jesus, cover me with Your Precious Blood and fill me with Your Holy Spirit!
I love You, Jesus! I praise You, Jesus! I thank You, Jesus!
I shall follow You every day of my life.
Amen.



DAY

Twelve

Our Father who art in Heaven,
hallowed be Thy Name;
Thy Kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Amen.

Newsletter #12

Renee and I are back in Kazakhstan. We spent the past two months traveling the United States, raising awareness and support for the Kazakhstan missionary work. People in the United States often ask us if we are glad to be back home. In truth, we spend so little time in Michigan because of our busy traveling schedule so it is a difficult question to answer. Of course, we love being back in the United States. But God has called us to be medical missionaries in Kazakhstan during this season of our lives so we continue to trust and obey Him and keep our focus on the task at hand.

One of the problems we continue to face is the funding of the medical work here in Kazakhstan. We thank God that during our USA travels we received a check for \$50,000 from the Rotary Club to help pay for the ongoing support of the mobile medical unit. We have also been trying to raise \$15,000 to finish the installation of a Computer Tomographer, more commonly known as a CT Scanner. In the entire nation of Kazakhstan there are currently only two CT scanners and one of them recently stopped working. We didn't know where the \$15,000 for our CT scanner would come from so our team decided to fervently pray for this particular need.

One of the places I visited during our trip back to the United States was Christ Church in Memphis, Tennessee. I met with a group of church members at a private home one Saturday evening and shared with them some Kazakhstan stories. I also mentioned the need for a CT scanner to this group. Then the next day I visited their Sunday school classes and shared with the children what it was like being a medical missionary.

After the church services were over, I was standing alone with my luggage, waiting to be picked up for my trip to the airport. A car stopped in front of me and a friendly looking family rolled down their windows and thanked me for coming to their church. They assured me that they would be praying for me. I thanked them and then watched their car depart. Suddenly, the driver made four left-hand turns and ended up right back in front of me. Down went the driver-side window again and the man said, “Just one more thing, Dr. Wortz. My wife and I want to help with the installation of the CT scanner.”

I proceeded to thank him again. Then he added, “We will send you a check for \$15,000 next week so you can get it up and running.”

As they drove away for a second time, tears welled up in my eyes and I began to cry. I was overwhelmed by their generosity and kindness. We would finally have a working CT scanner.

Now that we are back in Kazakhstan, we had the opportunity to spend time with a visiting young surgeon who is discerning God’s call about the possibility of working with us here in Kazakhstan. We were very encouraged during his one-week visit with us. Of course, we would love to have him here but we had to guard some of our enthusiasm. We did not want to put any undo pressure on him because we understand that ultimately God must be the Caller, not us. While this young surgeon was with us, we took the opportunity to visit a place called Moladoyznea. We were trying to decide if we should take the Mobile Medical Clinic there this summer. Moladoyznea is a town of about 8,100 people and it is a two-hour drive from where we are stationed in Karaganda. We had heard that Moladoyznea had a hospital that served all the surrounding towns totaling about 18,000 people.

To be completely honest, I thought that I had been in Kazakhstan long enough to know that nothing would really be able to surprise me anymore. I thought I had gotten used to the crumbling medical infrastructure.

I was wrong. My heart truly ached in a new way as we made the rounds.

We learned that this hospital has had no power since the beginning of the year because they did not have enough money to pay for electricity. For humanitarian reasons the electric company was “forced” to provide the hospital with one hour of electricity a day. The hospital staff never knew when that one-hour would be. If someone needed emergency surgery, the head of the hospital would have to physically travel to the power company and plead face-to-face with those in charge for a few extra hours of electricity so the surgery could be performed.

I saw a man in this hospital who had suffered a heart attack and had not had an EKG since his admission because there was no power available for him. The “hour of power” ran out before the hospital staff could get to him.

I saw an extremely ill diabetic who had not had his blood sugar checked for three days because the hospital lab had no electricity. The hospital’s hand held glucometer had run out of test strips months ago.

I saw an elderly gentleman with asthma and emphysema who could not get breathing treatments or oxygen. As I stood near his side and watched him gasp for breath, I silently begged God to forgive me for every wasted medical resource I had taken for granted while practicing medicine in the United States. It is one thing to hear about suffering people in a distant country but it is another thing to watch as a man right in front of you struggles and gasps for each breath knowing that his suffering could be alleviated with something as basic as electricity and oxygen.

I think one of the greatest sorrows in life is when we have to watch people around us suffer physically, mentally or spiritually and we find ourselves unable to “fix it.” These are the times that we must surrender everything to Jesus and remember that He is the Divine Physician. He truly loves those around us more than we ever could.

We recently had a situation in our family where Renee and I had to do just that: surrender everything to Jesus. Our son-in-law Jamie, a fourth year medical student in the United States, had his tonsils out. All seemed well and He was sent home that same day, as is the norm. In the middle of the night Jamie started hemorrhaging from his mouth copious amounts of blood. Our daughter Libby called for help and an ambulance was immediately dispatched. However, Jamie continued to hemorrhage from the incision and realized the first responders would not make it in time to save him. He ended up saving his own life by putting one of his fingers down his throat and exerting pressure on the incision. He was eventually brought to a hospital in Lansing, Michigan where he had surgery for the second time. The doctor was sure he had fixed the problem and Jamie was then sent home. Like a nightmare that never ends, the very next day the same thing happened. Jamie started bleeding profusely. Again, he ended up in the Emergency Room and back in surgery as the medical team tried to fix Jamie’s throat again to stop the hemorrhaging.

Libby wrote to us: “...I’m tired of seeing my husband’s blood everywhere I look. God has given me supernatural peace and joy and I know this means we are doing something right for His Kingdom. This is war! Please continue to pray, as I know you are. Jamie is bleeding externally but I know his heart is broken too. This is my biggest concern. Pray that he will have hope and not fear!”

Renee and I felt so helpless. We were half way around the world, striving to faithfully answer the Lord's call in a country full of suffering, yet nothing compared to the sorrow in our own hearts as we thought of how much our son-in-law and pregnant daughter were suffering. The reality of Libby mopping up her husband's blood and wondering if she was going to end up a widow from a simple tonsillectomy was one of the most difficult things we had to wrestle with in Kazakhstan. Night and day the prayers never stopped. Family and friends got everyone we knew to pray. Finally, after much prayer and the surgeon's skill, the third surgery worked. Jaime had lost one third of his blood in just a few days but he is alive and doing well. We praise God and thank Jesus, the Great Physician, for the merciful love He has for our children and for all those we encounter each day.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

John 4:46-54

Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death. "Unless you people see signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe." The royal official said, "Sir, come down before my child dies." "Go," Jesus replied, "your son will live." The man took Jesus at his word and departed. While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, "Yesterday, at one in the afternoon, the fever left him." Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." So he and his whole household believed.

Miracle Prayer

Lord, Jesus, I come before You just as I am.
I am sorry for my sins. I repent of my sins. Please forgive me.
In Your Name I forgive all others for what they have done against me.
I renounce Satan, the evil spirits and all their works.
I give You my entire self, Lord Jesus, now and forever.
I invite You into my life, Jesus. I accept You as my Lord, God and Savior.
Heal me. Change me. Strengthen me in body, soul and spirit.
Come Lord Jesus, cover me with Your Precious Blood and fill me with Your Holy Spirit!
I love You, Jesus! I praise You, Jesus! I thank You, Jesus!
I shall follow You every day of my life.
Amen.

DAY

Thirteen

Our Father who art in Heaven,
hallowed be Thy Name;
Thy Kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Amen.

Newsletter #13

You have seen through our Kazakhstan newsletters how Terry and I have faced many unexpected challenges during our time here. I certainly have been asked to do things that I thought are way out of my league. Yet God continues to ask me to do these things so that I can learn to depend totally on Him. I do this in order to strengthen my relationship with Him and to help others. He wants me to understand that it is not by my own cleverness that challenges and problems are solved. No, it is with His help. I have learned that by my cooperating with His grace, solutions and even healings take place.

There was one such situation that I would like to share concerning a young Kazak woman. This woman did not speak English very well, as it was her fourth language. This was somewhat of a barrier but in the end, she and I managed to communicate.

Deep wounds from her past were surfacing in her life and negatively affecting her. She had heard that the Americans were Christians and hoped that somehow I would be able to help her get her life in order.

She was desperate to be healed.

As this young woman and I began working together, I soon realized that her situation was indeed “one big hot mess,” as the saying goes. However, I knew that God specializes in “train wrecks.” I knew this young woman would need a lot of counseling and this was something I had done years ago when I worked at a crisis pregnancy center in Michigan. You never know what experiences God puts you through that He will one day have you recall for His purpose. I’ve come to see that many things in life are really preparation courses for things to come.

One of the things I observed when I first came to Kazakhstan is that there were a lot of hurting, broken people. And their defense mechanism for this kind of deep, broken-hearted pain is to just ignore it. Of course, no matter what country a person is from, this doesn't work.

The young woman I was working with had suffered the wounds of incest, abortion, attempted rape, suicide and the murder of a family member. So many tragic things in her young life! The saddest part is that her story is not that uncommon in Kazakhstan. The Kazakhstan people have suffered through seventy years of atheistic communism under the government of the former Soviet Union. On the surface they try to put on their best faces as they move forward but deep down so many of them are screaming in desperation for help and healing. This is exactly what this young lady was wanting. She was desperate for any help and healing I could offer her. Some of the details she shared with me were almost too horrible to even think about. Yet, like an open wound on her heart and soul that gets infected and must be cleansed and disinfected, it needed to be dealt with. First she needed to acknowledge it was there and then she needed to take action to help heal it.

After our initial meeting, we began one week of intense counseling. There were many tears during the hours of remembering sickening and heartbreaking accounts of her life.

When I first met this young woman, I had thought of her as normal, shy, quiet young lady. I never suspected the sorrows she had bottled up inside her. I have learned to try and never judge a person by their first impressions. People are often very good at disguising what is really going on inside of them.

There was one point during our counseling session that I remember praying, "Oh, dear Lord! Why are you using me to do this? I'm not qualified to do something as serious as this." Jesus gently made me understand that it wasn't by my strength or abilities that I was going to help her. It was ultimately going to be by His healing power. Still, there were times I felt overwhelmed. It's one thing to do counseling with young ladies facing a crisis pregnancy in your own country and speaking clearly in your own language. This was a totally difference experience for me. Some things just didn't translate well and I often felt very inadequate. And yet those are the exact times I had to interiorly pray and call upon the Holy Spirit, trusting that God would take care of things.

We did make it through that long and emotional week. At the end of it, I believe I had an inspiration from the Holy Spirit. He inspired me to take the young woman to a nearby Muslim cemetery. I brought with us a cookie sheet, some matches and a beautiful bottle of Egyptian perfume. During our week together, I had taken notes on everything she shared with me and I also brought this stack of papers with us.

When we got to the cemetery, I put the cookie sheet on the ground and set the stack of papers on it. I explained to her that we were going to have a funeral service of sorts. We lit the papers and watched them burn as we offered to God a heartfelt prayer of thanksgiving for His wonderful gift of forgiveness.

After the papers were done burning, we poured the perfume on the ashes. We then asked God to turn the ashes into sweet-smelling perfume. There was so much symbolism in this act and none of it was lost on this young lady.

She shed many tears that day but unlike the copious amount of tears she cried during the week, these tears were different. These were tears of freedom. I could see it when I looked into her eyes.

She was free.

I will never forget the feeling I experienced when I looked around that cemetery before we left. I thought to myself, "I bet there haven't been very many Christians here in this cemetery. Perhaps we are the very first to come here asking the Lord Jesus for the healing, forgiveness, and peace that only He can give."

I praise God that new ground had been broken that day. I could almost feel the Holy Angels surrounding that place. Even if it had been nighttime, I suspect I could have still seen this young lady's face, glowing and radiant with the joy of Jesus. It was truly an amazing thing to witness. I don't think I will ever forget it for as long as I live.

The next day, the young lady had to return to the darkness that her family and friends continued to live in. However, the change in her was so obvious that one of her friends asked what had happened to her. She shared everything with her and then her friend asked if there would be any way that she could meet with me to do the same!

Now I barely had a week left in this particular area so I was not sure if I would be able give her friend the time and attention she deserved. Also, a new challenge presented itself. Her friend didn't know any English. I told her that I could at least meet with her a couple of times and the first young lady would be her translator.

These two young ladies had been friends for many years, since their early childhood. However, I thought I was going to have to pick up the first young woman, who was translating for her friend, off the ground. She was completely shocked when she heard her friend's story. She never suspected the sorrows and terrible abuse her friend had also experienced.

At first I felt somewhat frustrated that I could not finish what I started with the second young woman because of time restraints. However, I now understand that the seeds of healing and forgiveness have been planted. I am praying that the Lord Jesus will use these two precious young women to bring hope and healing to many Kazakhstan women. I know that it wasn't my cleverness that ultimately helped these two ladies. It was my willingness to surrender to Jesus and have Him use me to bring hope and healing in His Name. I know if these two women do the same, He will use them too.

And what about you? Do you need the healing of Jesus in your own life? Will you willingly surrender to Him? Are you longing for a new life of hope, peace and freedom that only He can give? Will you then bring His hope and healing to others?

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

John 11:38-44

Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. "Take away the stone," he said. "But Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad stench for he has been there four days." Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. You always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me." When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

Miracle Prayer

Lord, Jesus, I come before You just as I am.
I am sorry for my sins. I repent of my sins. Please forgive me.
In Your Name I forgive all others for what they have done against me.
I renounce Satan, the evil spirits and all their works.
I give You my entire self, Lord Jesus, now and forever.
I invite You into my life, Jesus. I accept You as my Lord, God and Savior.
Heal me. Change me. Strengthen me in body, soul and spirit.
Come Lord Jesus, cover me with Your Precious Blood and fill me with Your Holy Spirit!
I love You, Jesus! I praise You, Jesus! I thank You, Jesus!
I shall follow You every day of my life.

Amen

DAY

Fourteen

Our Father who art in Heaven,
hallowed be Thy Name;
Thy Kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Amen.

Newsletter #14

Trying to do anything normal in Kazakhstan is, well...challenging.

We told Nurse Joyce that we would travel back with her to the little town of Sergaivka in north Kazakhstan when she asked for our help. Our plan was to buy our train tickets a couple days in advance like we have normally done. Then when traveling day arrives, we show up at the train station, hop aboard the train and nine hours later we're there.

Sounds normal, right?

Remember, this is Kazakhstan. We have discovered that normal is often the exception not the rule.

It was a Tuesday morning, two days before we needed to leave. Joyce was at our door, trying to catch her breath after running down several flights of steps to tell us the bad news: there were no available train tickets to Sergaivka.

We discussed our options and decided that we needed to rent a vehicle for the trip.

Now crossing the frozen steppes of Kazakhstan in December on badly constructed, snow-covered roads was not my idea of a fun road trip but our options were limited. Joyce needed to get back to Sergaivka and then there were the twenty-three boxes of humanitarian aid that also needed to get there too. This would be a perfect opportunity to transport these much-needed items.

Being the "take charge" kind of guy that I am, I went ahead and volunteered to find our transportation.

I started by contacting everyone that I knew with vans for hire but none of them ended up being big enough for the three of us and our twenty-three boxes.

So I decided to go to the city bus garage to see about renting a bus. I entered the cold, dark building and had to climb two flights of stairs before I found an office with someone in it. The woman secretary was busy at her work and ignored me, as is the custom here. When enough time had elapsed and she finally acknowledged my presence, I asked her if I could speak with the person in charge of bus rentals. She said she would page a man named “Mr. Ukranski” and then told me to have a seat.

She was fascinated with the fact that I was an American and struck up a conversation. She continued to page Mr. Ukranski several more times during the following thirty minutes as we talked. She then shared, “I don’t think Mr. Ukranski likes his job. Sometimes he disappears for hours on end.”

After that comment, I suggested that when Mr. Ukranski decided to be found, to please have him give me a call and I gave her my phone number. She agreed that this was a good idea and then added that I might as well take an application to fill out since Mr. Ukranski would need it before I could talk with him.

I have learned not to ask “why?” anymore here in Kazakhstan but I admit I was tempted to ask her why she didn’t give me the application when I first told her what I wanted.

As soon as I got home I got a phone call from Mr. Ukranski saying he would meet with me. We discussed the costs of renting a bus, agreed upon a price, and then I told him I would be back to meet with him in thirty minutes. He said he would be waiting for me.

When I arrived, the secretary was genuinely surprised to see me back so soon. When I explained about my phone call with Mr. Ukranski, she told me that his office was right below the one we were in. However, I couldn’t get there from here. I needed to leave the building, circle around to the back and enter back in through another door.

Out and around I went to find a dark hall with nine doors, none of which had Mr. Ukranski’s name. This was starting to remind me of one of those computer adventure games: “Escape from Kazakhstan.”

I went ahead and started knocking on doors. No luck. The first eight were locked. However, the last door opened.

“Success!” I thought.

I wandered around the empty office until I found a break room with a woman sitting all alone, drinking a cup of tea. I told her I was looking for Mr. Ukranski and she told he had just left but would be back.

I went out to the main office area again and sat down on a bench made with a 2x4 board.

After about thirty minutes, another woman came into the room. I stood up and told her why I was there and she told me to sit back down while she paged Mr. Ukranski.

After another half hour and several more pages she said to me, "I don't think Mr. Ukranski likes his job. He frequently disappears for hours at a time."

I was thinking about giving up on Mr. Ukranski altogether when he suddenly appeared! He invited me into his office where he had me explain all over again what I wanted.

I did so, very politely.

Next, he spent a fair amount of time negotiating the price with me even though we had already agreed on a price when I spoke with him on the phone.

When that was finally settled, he took my application and we shook hands. I then watched as he filled out a form entitled "Requisition." He told me I had to go to another office and turn in this requisition form and there they would give me an order form. I had to go back around to the front of the building, up to the second floor and there I would find that office.

Out and around I went, up to the second floor, and entered the office where three women were sitting behind desks. I patiently waited the proper amount of time they needed to believe that I was not a figment of their imaginations. When that amount of time was up, one of them went ahead and acknowledged my existence. I handed her the requisition form. She then used it to make my order form.

Now that I had the order form, I tried to pay her. She told me I needed to go to the cashier's office to do that. I asked her where the cashier's office was and she said to exit the building, walk down the street, cross the street and then enter another building.

Why did that not surprise me?

Out I went again, down the snow-covered street, dodging traffic as I made my way into the building where the cashier's office was. This building was also cold and dark.

Knocking on doors with my trusty flashlight in hand, I eventually spied a closed cashier's cage with just a crack of light peeping through it. I knocked and behold, another living human being! I kindly asked her if she was working and she answered, "Of course."

I gave her the requisition and order forms along with the money. She proceeded to fill out a two-page receipt. As I took the receipt I asked her if I was done. She said, "No, now you need to take the requisition and order forms along with the two-page receipt back to Mr. Ukranski."

I bit my lip. I didn't know if I was going to laugh, cry or scream.

Out I went again. The sun had set and it was now dark. I crossed the street and down I went, making my way back to the original building.

"Lord, is this some kind of punishment?" I prayed. "How long will I have to wait this time to see Mr. Ukranski? It's no wonder he doesn't like his job! I've only been here one day and I can't stand it!"

I entered the building, found the office again, knocked on the door and Glory to God! Mr. Ukranski was there.

I handed him the paperwork, praying all the while that it was correct. He took his time, inspecting everything carefully. He then shook his head up and down, giving me a look of approval.

I sheepishly asked if that is all and he said that is all. Wow! I almost hugged him.

We had our bus.



The trip to Sergaivka took about ten hours. The weather had warmed up to a balmy twenty degrees and the roads were clear. The police stopped us two times. They were looking for "fines" (bribes). Thankfully, they decided since we were carrying humanitarian aid they would not "fine" us.

Soon after we unpacked, a member of our missionary team named Rob decided he was going to fix the bathtub area so we would be able to take showers. As he was carefully drilling holes in the wall above the tub, the large German made mirror fell off the wall and landed on the Russian toilet. The good news is the stout German mirror did not break. The bad news is the Russian toilet was smashed to pieces.

Trying to see the humor in it all we began singing joyfully, “What a Mighty God We Serve!” No problem. We had an outhouse.

When I made my way to the outhouse, I soon realized there was a problem. The outhouse had three walls and a door with an outside latch but when I opened the door and looked inside I saw that it had no seat of any kind and nobody had dug out beneath the outhouse. As I turned around and tried to leave I discovered the door was locked from the outside! At first I thought someone was playing a joke on me. But after several moments of silence, I was still locked in. I then realized when I had lifted the hook up, it must have stuck in the up position until I closed the door which shook it loose and the hook then went down into the lock eye.

Would this be my legacy? “Medical Missionary Declared Martyr; found frozen to death in a Kazakhstan outhouse.” If I had been Catholic I could have been declared: “Patron Saint of Outhouses.”

No, it would have been too humiliating to end this way. I thought hard and then remembered I had a long key in my pocket. I was able to carefully slip it through a crack in the door and make my escape.

Like I said at the very beginning: trying to do anything normal in Kazakhstan is, well... challenging.

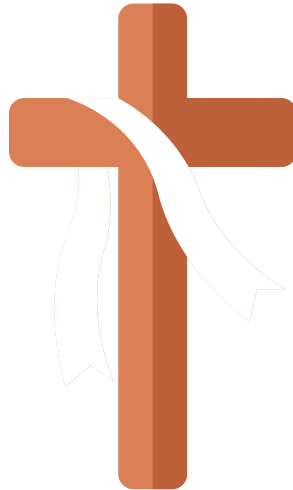
TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 12:1-3

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Miracle Prayer

Lord, Jesus, I come before You just as I am.
I am sorry for my sins. I repent of my sins. Please forgive me.
In Your Name I forgive all others for what they have done against me.
I renounce Satan, the evil spirits and all their works.
I give You my entire self, Lord Jesus, now and forever.
I invite You into my life, Jesus. I accept You as my Lord, God and Savior.
Heal me. Change me. Strengthen me in body, soul and spirit.
Come Lord Jesus, cover me with Your Precious Blood and fill me with Your Holy Spirit!
I love You, Jesus! I praise You, Jesus! I thank You, Jesus!
I shall follow You every day of my life.
Amen.



DAY

Fifteen

Our Father who art in Heaven,
hallowed be Thy Name;
Thy Kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Amen.

Newsletter #15

As I shared before, five days a week there are about one hundred children being fed by a group of ladies who belong to the new church in Sergaivka. These children would only have bread and water to eat and drink this winter if it were not for this work of mercy. Most of these children come from intact families but there is not enough work for their parents to provide the necessities. The men need to make the agonizing decision to either buy coal to heat their homes or use the money to buy food to feed their families. There is usually not enough money to do both. The situation in many parts of Kazakhstan is that desperate. The average high winter temperature here is ten degrees below zero. This is what the men have told us: “Freezing will kill us today but starvation takes awhile.”

Kazakhstan is a flat, treeless great plain. Stalin ordered trees to be planted and the prisoners at the time were the ones who did all the work. Yet, in order to be able to buy food for their families now, it's not unusual for men today to sneak out at night and cut down the trees that are still left standing in the city park to burn in their homes for heat.

I spoke with some of the men in Sergaivka about the possibility of bringing job opportunities to their town and was told, “We wish you could buy the whole village and put all of us to work. We want to work!”

When I was going through missionary training in the United States last summer, I met a man named Tim. Tim told me about the Hitzler Stove Company in his hometown of Berne, Indiana. Tim is a Mennonite and the stove company is owned by evangelical Mennonites. The owners want to use their stove technology to help the people of Kazakhstan. Tim went on to tell me about a machine that compressed straw into 12x3 inch logs that burned better than oak!

I spoke with the mayor of Sergaivka and shared with him what Tim had told me. The mayor was very excited about the straw machine. He thought this would be a great opportunity as there were mountains of straw in the fields just waiting to be burned off in the spring. The men were also thrilled when I told them about the straw machines. They were open to anything that would give them job opportunities and a product that would help families. This past month I had a chance to speak with Tim and his friends from the Hitzler Stove Company. They have agreed to come to Kazakhstan to see what contribution they can make to help Kazakhstan families.

I would say that many of the men that I have met in Kazakhstan are discouraged, heartbroken and without hope. Knowing the Source of all hope is God working in the human spirit, I was not surprised to find out that none of the men in Sergaivka were involved in the new church.

I asked the men around town about this and they told me that they had been given Bibles and were reading them diligently in their homes. They also told me that they would ask their wives about what they were learning in church and in the cells each week. However, they were not interested in actually going to the church because it was mostly made up of women and children.

In order to try and break this mindset, another missionary, Rob, and myself called a “men only” meeting. This gave us an opportunity to talk “man to man” about God. Fifteen men accepted our invitation and we talked together for nearly two hours. Stahs, the man who drove me around town in the horse-drawn sleigh when I was dressed as Santa Claus, was one of the men in attendance. He shared that he really enjoyed our time together on “Santa Day” and was surprised that we did that because he thought that Christians weren’t allowed to have fun.

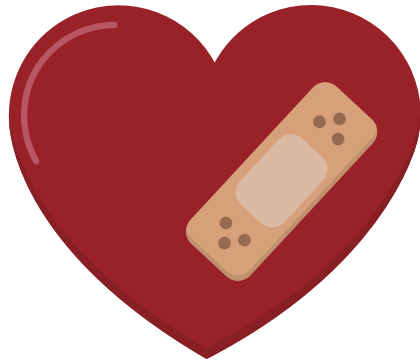
Not long after the men’s meeting, Stahs’ wife came knocking on our door. She was in a panic. Their seven year-old son had tipped over a kettle full of boiling water on his bare foot and was very badly burned. We quickly gathered the medical things that we would need and off we went to their apartment.

We found the child on his bed, writhing in pain. He was holding up his leg as a roll of skin hung off his heel. I told Joyce to hold him so he wouldn’t kick. I then put on gloves and quickly but carefully proceeded to cut away the dead flesh.

The boy screamed in pain! His father and mother helplessly looked on. Then once the cutting was done and I put the salve and dressing on his foot, he became calm.

Gently, in my broken Russian I said to him, “I am sorry I hurt you but all that dead skin had to come off. I do love you. Will you let me pray for you now that Jesus will help you get better?”

Without saying a word, the boy tried to smile and then lifted up his little hand for me to hold. As I prayed aloud, all of the hearts in the room were touched. I could especially tell this experience was having a profound impact on Stahs.



I want to tell you the story of another one of my patients. His name is Rasheed and he was brought to the Mikaduke clinic by Rob, one of the American missionaries on our team who I have mentioned in previous newsletters.

Rasheed was a young man in his early twenties and, until very recently, lived in Uzbekistan (a place that borders Kazakhstan.) Rasheed had not a penny to pay for his visit, which was fine, as he was a refugee. Rob brought Rasheed to me because he was suffering debilitating pain due to the beatings he endured while in prison. What was his crime? It was preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

At the age of fifteen, Rasheed had found new life in Jesus through the testimony of Christians in the home country where he had been born. Within a few years of becoming a Christian, Rasheed had grown so strong in his faith that, despite no formal training, he started pastoring a Church. He was arrested for the first time while still a teenager and charged with the crime of preaching the Gospel. He was then exiled to Uzbekistan, put in prison and told to stop preaching. He was then released from prison. However, he refused to obey and continued to preach the Gospel in Uzbekistan.

Rasheed was eventually arrested again but this time he was kept in prison for months. What angered his jailers the most was when fellow prisoners asked Rasheed why he was there, he would share with them the reason. Many of the prisoners came to accept Jesus as Savior because of Rasheed’s witness and this is what outraged the authorities.

Then the beatings began. The worst beatings Rasheed received were on the bottoms of his feet. The jailers would strap him down and then take turns hitting the soles of his feet with a baton. This was done over and over again. Rasheed's poor feet became so bloodied and swollen that they no longer looked like feet. He related that one day he was in such excruciating pain that he feared, if given the chance, he would kill himself if beaten one more time. He begged God to stop the beatings so he wouldn't fall into despair.

The beatings stopped after that.

Through a providential set of circumstances, the British Broadcasting Network (BBC) heard about Rasheed's plight and produced a story about the persecution of Christians in Uzbekistan. After it aired, thousands of people from Europe wrote letters to the Uzbekistan authorities demanding his release.

Rasheed was eventually set free but with the stern warning that if he was ever caught preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ again in Uzbekistan, he would immediately be imprisoned. They told Rasheed that he would *never* be released if it happened again.

This was the first time in my life that I had been in the presence of someone who had actually been tortured because of witnessing for Jesus Christ. I was completely humbled as I gently examined the young man before me. Once again, I felt the need to tell Jesus that I was sorry for all the times I had complained while on the mission field.

Silently, I continued to pray and ask the Lord to bless and to heal this dear young man.

*These are the days of Ezekiel, the dry bones becoming as flesh;
And these are the days of your servant David, rebuilding the temple of praise.
And these are the days of the harvest, the fields are white in Your world.
And we are the laborers in your vineyard, declaring the word of the Lord.*

*Behold He comes, riding on the clouds,
Shining like the sun at the trumpet call;
Lift your voice, it's the year of jubilee,
And out of Zion's hill salvation comes!*

(Lyrics by Robin Mark)

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 61:1-4

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor. They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations.

Miracle Prayer

Lord, Jesus, I come before You just as I am.

I am sorry for my sins. I repent of my sins. Please forgive me.

In Your Name I forgive all others for what they have done against me.

I renounce Satan, the evil spirits and all their works.

I give You my entire self, Lord Jesus, now and forever.

I invite You into my life, Jesus. I accept You as my Lord, God and Savior.

Heal me. Change me. Strengthen me in body, soul and spirit.

Come Lord Jesus, cover me with Your Precious Blood and fill me with Your Holy Spirit!

I love You, Jesus! I praise You, Jesus! I thank You, Jesus!

I shall follow You every day of my life.

Amen.

DAY

Sixteen

Our Father who art in Heaven,
hallowed be Thy Name;
Thy Kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Amen.

Newsletter #16

I thought I knew what spiritual warfare was. I was pretty confident in my ability to fight against powers of wickedness in high places through fervent prayer. However, this month I became overwhelmed. It seemed as if everything I did ended in defeat.

I can trace when things took a turn about one month ago when our prayer team had to take a pause. Every Saturday morning at 10am five of us have been faithfully meeting and interceding for Kazakhstan. This past month two members of our team had to go back to the United States, both of them nurses. Jeanine had been ill for a while and needed to go home for a rest. Joyce received news that a family member was going to die soon and she needed to go be with her family. Soon after they left is when the trouble really began. Group intercessory prayer is so important when we are doing God's work!

Like we've mentioned before, Joyce was in charge of a medical educational seminar called CHE that was to take place the following week in Atbasar. I told her not to worry about anything because Renee and I would spend the next fifteen days in Atbasar, helping to take care of the seminar and also helping the local church. Plus, since April, I had been working on organizing a team of twenty-one Americans who would be arriving to build a greenhouse in Atbasar. I thought this would be a perfect time to settle the final logistical issues with a woman named Natalia who was in charge of things on that end before the American work team arrived. Natalia was also the person overseeing the CHE seminar.

I spent many hours trying to buy train tickets to Atbasar, something that had never been a problem before. However, for some reason unknown to us, tickets to Atbasar were simply unavailable this time. We ended up having to find a car to drive there.

Upon our arrival in Atbasar, we were immediately met by Natalia. She insisted that I speak with her right away.

Renee and I were exhausted but I consented to a “quick meeting.” Natalia told me that the cost to us for having the CHE medical seminar had been arbitrarily increased by over 40%! Then she went on to tell me that she only had room for five Americans for the greenhouse working team. I was so tired and shocked that I was speechless.

I ended up having meetings with Natalia’s boss over the next week only to discover that they had gone back on all their promises concerning the greenhouse, demanding that we redesign it and double the size. It was a no win situation. No matter how hard I tried to come up with an agreeable solution, they just dug in their heels and greedily demanded more and more. I felt defeated.

Then two days after we arrived in Atbasar, I received a phone call from Dr. David Sir, the professor coming from England to teach the CHE seminar. He was in a panic because he was in the Almaty, Kazakhstan airport and could not get a visa. After several unsuccessful phone calls on my end, I had no choice. I had to cancel the CHE seminar. Again, I felt defeated. I had promised Joyce that I would take care of everything while she was gone and now everything was falling apart on my watch.

With all this drama going on, Renee and I were living in a small, stifling hot, fifth floor apartment. Running water was available for about an hour on good days. There was no refrigerator and no screens on the two tiny windows. We got only bugs, not breezes.

I had to use the cramped living room as my clinic to see patients because there was no other place available during our stay.

The one bright spot of our trip was our last Sunday in Atbasar. We had a church service in the apartment and over thirty people showed up! The people were overflowing into the hallway and it was standing room only.

After returning to Karaganda and finally having a chance to take a shower, I was now ready to make the painful decision of cancelling the greenhouse project. When I reported this to the leadership team, I felt vanquished.

However, God was at work. After wrestling with the situation, the idea came to me to suggest that the American work team could be used to refurbish the floor given to us for a clinic at the Mikaduke Pediatric Hospital. This hospital is in the poorest part of Karaganda with unemployment running more than 80%.

The leadership team took this suggestion and ran with it! They decided not only would they use the team of Americans to help build our clinic while they were here but this team would also build the new church in Mikaduke. This was beyond my wildest dreams!

When I wrote to Joyce back home in America about what had happened concerning the greenhouse project, I was concerned how she and her team would react. Her letter back assured me that the team's only concern was serving the Lord through us in the best way possible. She then went on to tell me that she had just accepted a grant in our names from the local Rotary Club for a new mobile clinic in the amount of \$108,000!

The battle for the soul of Kazakhstan is still being waged. In my short time here I have learned that nothing I do by my own power will make a lasting difference. But only God makes the difference in everything He does. For reasons only God knows, He does His work through imperfect people like me.

So here I am. I've been commanded to go out and change the world yet I'm powerless to do anything on my own. It is only when I completely surrender myself to my Lord that I can then watch Him work His marvelous plan through me.

“Through our God I shall do valiantly, it is He who shall tread down our enemies. I'll sing and shout the victory: CHRIST IS KING!”



The American work team has been more successful than any of us dared to dream! Not because of all the work they did in Mikaduke but because of all the lives they have touched.

We had three “prayer walks” in Mikaduke. Like I mentioned earlier, Mikaduke is the poorest part of all of Karaganda. As we walked, we prayed for all the people who lived in the houses we passed by. We fervently asked the Lord that they would come to know and love Him. We also introduced ourselves to the people we met along the way. We explained we were from America and we wanted to invite them to our Sunday church service. Most of the people were thrilled that we were there and many agreed to come.

The Mikaduke Hospital has a very tiny auditorium and it was packed to overflowing with over 100 people! They came because of our “prayer walk” invitations. Almost every one of them had never attended a church service before in their life. Our son Gary was with us as part of the short-term American work team and he ended up telling the people who came that day the Good News of Jesus! A brand new Kazakhstan pastor named Vitally also joined him in sharing the Good News.

I must tell you that I am deeply touched by these people who desperately need to hear that God loves them! Many of the people we encounter think that God must hate them because of the communists being atheists and rejecting God. They think of themselves as abandoned and forgotten by God because of this. To see their faces when they start to understand that God has not forgotten them and that they are loved! I’ve seen many tear-streaked faces here in Kazakhstan and these particular tears are tears of joy! My own eyes fill with tears and my heart swells with joy when I think of my son Gary sharing the Good News of God’s love with these people. There is nothing more a father could ask for when he sees his own child sharing his burdens and love for Jesus!

God is so marvelous and truly does work in miraculous ways. I came to Karaganda to start a medical clinic and in addition have helped start two churches! I was put in charge of coordinating our American work team to build a greenhouse in Atbasar but instead of building a greenhouse I ended up helping start a church in Mikaduke!

The following Sunday and I was the one who ended up giving the sermon to the people. I told them about the centurion named Cornelius from the Book of Acts. Cornelius wanted to find God but he didn’t know where to turn. God heard the prayers of Cornelius. He sent a foreigner to Cornelius to tell him the good news of Jesus Christ.

As soon as I finished preaching, a young man sitting in the back of the room immediately jumped up and shot out of the room like a rocket. He ran so fast that I thought he must be sick and needed fresh air. However, he never left the building. He ran into the next room and began pacing up and down like a caged animal. Eventually Sveitlana came and told me that the young man was asking if I would come so he could speak with me.

I entered the room, sat down on a cold wooden bench and then watched this agitated young man pace back and forth. He finally broke the silence and exclaimed, “That message! It was my life you were describing! How could you know all that about me? How did you know I have been crying out to God? How did you know I’ve been trying to find Him? I’ve never spoken to you before. How could you know the deepest desires of my heart? How can I make peace with God? I need peace. Please, tell me what to do?”

I was deeply moved as I felt this young man's despair. I proceeded to tell him more about Jesus. We talked and talked and finally I asked him if he would like to give his life to Jesus.

“Will you accept His forgiveness, all the love and the deep peace that Jesus wants to pour into your heart?”

He began weeping and said there was nothing he wanted more. We prayed together and soon we both were weeping tears of joy. He told me for the first time in his life he had peace in his heart – the peace that he had so longed for. Together we left the room, new brothers in Christ.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Acts 10:30-33

Cornelius answered: “Three days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me and said, ‘Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor. Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He is a guest in the home of Simon the tanner, who lives by the sea.’ So I sent for you immediately, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us.”

Miracle Prayer

Lord, Jesus, I come before You just as I am.
I am sorry for my sins. I repent of my sins. Please forgive me.
In Your Name I forgive all others for what they have done against me.
I renounce Satan, the evil spirits and all their works.
I give You my entire self, Lord Jesus, now and forever.
I invite You into my life, Jesus. I accept You as my Lord, God and Savior.
Heal me. Change me. Strengthen me in body, soul and spirit.
Come Lord Jesus, cover me with Your Precious Blood and fill me with Your Holy Spirit!
I love You, Jesus! I praise You, Jesus! I thank You, Jesus!
I shall follow You every day of my life.
Amen.

DAY

Seventeen

Our Father who art in Heaven,
hallowed be Thy Name;
Thy Kingdom come.
Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
Amen.

Newsletter #17

The next day the word quickly spread throughout the village that the American doctor had returned. I began seeing patients at 9am sharp. At 11am I took a quick break to see for myself the children that Joyce and some members of the church had been feeding. These church ladies had identified approximately one hundred village children whose parents were so poor they could only give them a little bread and water for their daily food. With Joyce helping financially, the church ladies were able to cook a hot meal for these children, five days a week. My heart was touched as I watched the children enjoying the meal and remembering that eighteen months ago this church didn't even exist. Yet these new believers in Jesus took the Gospel seriously and wanted to immediately put their love of God and neighbor into action.

The church in Sergaivka consists of approximately sixty adults, thirty teens and thirty children. They meet in small home groups or "cells" during the week for Bible study and prayer. Then every Sunday they all come together to worship God and spend time in fellowship.

One of the cells was meeting that very evening so I was able to attend. I ended up sitting next to a young lady who had heard about the church through a friend and had attended two times previously. As the Bible study began, this young lady opened up and shared about her search for God and for peace. She admitted nothing in her life was peaceful. She said that while she experienced brief moments of peace during the day, every night she was overcome with a terrible, overpowering fear. In her search for God, there was a time in her life that she had found herself with a group of people that ended up being a Satanic cult.

“It seems like all my life I have been searching for God but I have never found Him,” she explained. “I know that God exists because I have love in me and I know that I should be good to those who do me harm. But I have no peace in my heart. That is what I’m searching for. Why can’t I find peace?”

I was dumbfounded by her transparency. I was able to share with her the good news of Jesus. I explained to her that God is searching for her way more than she is searching for Him. I told her about Jesus, why He came and how much He loves her. I told her that He wants to give her peace. His is a peace that the world will never, ever be able to give. One of His titles is: “The Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6) and Saint Paul tells us: “He Himself is our peace.” (Ephesians 2:14)

Later, we broke up in small prayer groups and I asked her if she would like to receive the peace that Jesus gives by accepting Him as her Lord and Savior. She said she very much wanted to love and follow Jesus. Her radiant smile said it all after we prayed. She then exclaimed that she never before understood just how wonderful God’s love was until that moment!

Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will follow My word; and my Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our dwelling with him.” (John 14:23) ...Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”(John 14:27)

Before we went on this trip to Sergaivka, Renee was asked to make a Santa Claus suit for another missionary we are serving with here. One of Renee’s many talents is that of sewing. She made a beautiful Santa suit, fit to yours truly. She was even able to come up with a great fake white beard and a long white wig. She finished sewing the suit just in time for us to bring it with us for a trial run. The day I donned the Santa suit was one of the happiest days for me in Kazakhstan. The joy on the faces of the children as I handed them their Christmas candy was priceless. However, I will never forget one particular little girl who shyly told me that there was only one thing she wanted for Christmas: a banana.

Imagine for a moment a little girl in the United States being handed a beautiful doll. Now imagine that little girl holding the cherished doll in her arms, cradling it with love. This is what the little Kazakhstan girl did when I handed her a banana. She held that banana like it was a baby doll. Soon she would know what a banana tasted like but first she just wanted to let it sink in that this banana was her very own.

It was an unforgettable moment.

We then hired a sleigh pulled by horses to take “good ole Santa” and his bag of Christmas treats to church. The church members were filled with joy when they saw me. However, they begged me not to end my time as Santa at church but to keep going. They wanted me to ride through their entire town so I could bring the joy of Christmas to all the people of Sergaivka. It was then that I discovered that I had twice as much candy in my bag then I originally thought. As I made my way throughout the streets of town, I was able to give Christmas candy to every single person I met along the way.

It was great fun shouting: “Merry Christmas!” in both Russian and Kazakh. The children of the town were very surprised and delighted to see me. Many of them thought that I really was Santa. Some of them were smart enough to wonder why I had an accent and I told them it’s because I had come from very far away (which is absolutely true.) The adults loved me as Santa and kept thanking me over and over again for coming. I told the children and their families that they were all invited to come to church for Christmas to celebrate Jesus’ birthday. I think that day was truly one of the most joyous experiences of my life. "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope." Romans 15:13

I have more to share with you about Yurlan, the diabetic ten year-old boy. He was the child who had been on five injections of insulin a day but was able to go off insulin about a month after we prayed for him. I made sure he was continually checked and his numbers continued to be normal. Yurlan’s mother recently came to see me and she was in tears again but these were not happy tears. She told me that Yurlan was in the hospital and his diabetes was out of control. He had been off of insulin for over a year and was doing amazingly well but now suddenly everything had changed.

I listened intently as Yurlan’s mother continued. It was a miracle they could hardly believe when he was able to go off insulin. Their little son was cured by the power of Jesus. She told me her family wanted to attend the new church in Sergaivka but her extended family absolutely forbid it. One aunt told her that if her family became Christians, she would put a curse on them. Because of fear, she and her family isolated themselves from the Christians in town.

Yurlan continued to be healthy and happy but she continued to be afraid that he might get sick again. One day Yurlan got the flu. She thought about bringing him to the Christians for prayer but decided not to because if her aunt found out, she would curse them. Instead, she took Yurlan to a Folk-Islam Shaman. She told me that this Shaman did incantations over her son and then put a talisman around his neck. The next day Yurlan’s blood sugar soared and he needed to be put on insulin again.

Yurlan's mother was desperate. She truly believed that Jesus had healed her son and knew it was wrong of her to have taken him to the Shaman. She didn't know what she should do now. I talked with her for two hours about the love and power of Jesus. She then told me she was ready to accept Him and follow Him no matter what it cost her. I told her that I honestly did not know what would happen to Yurlan but, regardless of what happened to her son, she needed to be free from the darkness that she was in.

First she prayed and told Jesus that she accepted Him as her Lord and Savior. Then the two of us prayed for Yurlan. I was amazed at the look on her face. She radiated the peace that only Jesus can give. She was now a woman at peace. She told me that she didn't think it was possible to experience the love of God in such a way. I then took her to another room where Joyce, Renee and another missionary were waiting and praying. I introduced her as their new sister in Christ. She wept for a long time with joy as she met her new Christian family – a family of blessings not curses.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 3:14-19

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Miracle Prayer

Lord, Jesus, I come before You just as I am.
I am sorry for my sins. I repent of my sins. Please forgive me.
In Your Name I forgive all others for what they have done against me.
I renounce Satan, the evil spirits and all their works.
I give You my entire self, Lord Jesus, now and forever.
I invite You into my life, Jesus. I accept You as my Lord, God and Savior.
Heal me. Change me. Strengthen me in body, soul and spirit.
Come Lord Jesus, cover me with Your Precious Blood and fill me with Your Holy Spirit!
I love You, Jesus! I praise You, Jesus! I thank You, Jesus!
I shall follow You every day of my life.
Amen.

DAY

Eighteen

Our Father who art in Heaven,
hallowed be Thy Name;
Thy Kingdom come.
Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
Amen.

Newsletter #18

Renee and I are back in Sergaivka for a week. Before we could catch our breath and unpack, Nurse Joyce whisked us away to the nearby village of Samarskee where I would be seeing patients at a local clinic. To get there, we drove five miles off road and then through a river in our two-wheel drive all terrain van that Youth for Christ in Battle Creek, Michigan had provided for us.

The drive to Samarskee was going according to plan until we got to the river. I asked Joyce, "How deep is this?" She wasn't sure. I then thought about finding a stick to use as a staff. I could hold up my arms like Moses to part the water but remembered this was Kazakhstan. Trees and sticks are pretty rare around here. Instead, I said a quick prayer and slowly drove car into the river. I'm happy to report we made it to the other side without a problem.

As I worked at the clinic in Samarskee, the town where a new church had been started last summer, I was reminded of what this area was like just a few short years ago.

Initially some of the leaders were quite suspicious of our motivation for being here but as they watched how we took care of the people seeking medical attention, they soon warmed up to us. We wanted the love of Jesus that we spoke of to be real and practical. Our team did this by taking care of the needs of the sick, hungry and hurting around us to the best of our ability and resources. Not only did we strive to meet the people's physical needs, we often prayed with them and tried to meet their spiritual needs by sharing the good news of Jesus.

The next day we were back in Sergaivka where I spent a good part of the day seeing patients. A change had definitely taken place since the last time I visited. I sensed an air of hope and peace coming from God's presence here. It was beautiful. However, the one thing that had not changed was there was still no working indoor bathroom or outhouse. I took comfort in the fact that no one had cut down the one lone tree behind nearby bushes!

I was starting to feel quite confident in my ability to speak Russian at this point as I examined and talked with the patients. However, I soon had my wings clipped when I asked a woman if she smoked.

“Vu Koritsu?”

My translator, Sasha, suddenly looked perplexed and exclaimed, “Dr. Terry! You just called the woman a chicken.”

Oops! Thank goodness she had a good sense a humor.

God has provided the Sergaivka church with a new young pastor named Dimetri Vice. We happened to be there the Sunday he preached his very first sermon. The tiny church was filled to beyond capacity as nearly one hundred adults tried to find their places. The parents actually had to tell their children to wait outside since there was simply no more room.

I stood in the nearby hallway, listening intently to Dimetri's sermon. I was able to understand much of what he said. Afterwards I asked him how it went. He just beamed. He then excitedly shared how two people came up to him immediately following the service requesting him to pray with them. They wanted to repent of their sins and give their lives to Jesus.

We arrived back in Karaganda just in time to finish organizing a seminar that we've mentioned before in our newsletters: Community Health Evangelism/Education (CHE).

Thirty people attended this particular seminar. We had been praying that God would inspire at least three Kazakhstan volunteers to go through the CHE leader's training so they in turn could bring CHE to those who lived in villages all over Kazakhstan. Our prayers were answered on the last day when several of the attendees told us that they felt that God was calling them to be CHE leaders.

During our very last week of missionary work in Kazakhstan, our team met with the Mennonites from the Hitzer Stove Company in Berne, Indiana, USA. (I've mentioned these wonderful men in a previous newsletter.) They were here to help start a metal working factor in Atbasar. I can't tell you how encouraged we were when they shared how the news of this effort was already beginning to energize the area. It was giving hope, especially to the husbands and fathers of families who desperately wanted to work. We found out that Churches of all denominations in the United States were coming together with Rotary International to help make this dream a reality by their financial support. The purpose of the Mennonites' visit was to work out the logistics by gathering more information on marketing, supply and demand.

More good news! While recently working at our clinic in Mikaduke pediatric hospital, Dr. Vadim, the hospital director, sent word that he needed to meet with me. I soon found out from this happy man that because of the new high-efficient heating system that our USA supporters purchased for the hospital, he will be saving 60% of the cost for fuel that was budgeted for this coming winter. Due to this tremendous savings, he was now able and pay off all the hospital debt. He also had enough money left to replace fifty broken windows and purchase a new hot water system. For the first time in two years, I was able to wash my hands in hot water today. He also told me that he has on order a new water filtration system that will be installed in the spring. When this is done, the children will have safe drinking water. I cannot tell you the joy I felt in my heart hearing all this good news!

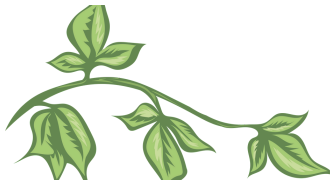
The day before we were to leave Kazakhstan for the last time and return back to the United States, I didn't think anything could make Renee and I happier than all the good news concerning the Mikaduke pediatric hospital. However, our God is a God of wonderful surprises and He was about to hit me with a really big surprise!

Dr. Filatov, the dean of the medical school in Karaganda, requested to meet with me. As soon as I arrived, he immediately began sharing the news that the medical school had been offered a contract to teach one hundred Pakistani and Iranian medical students per year for six years IN ENGLISH! He went on to explain that once the program was established, that would mean there would eventually be six hundred Pakistanis and Iranian medical students studying in Karaganda. He confided that he simply did not have enough English speaking professors to make this happen and was requesting my help to get the word out to other English speaking teachers and doctors. He said we could use audio/video/computer lessons as well as any short-term lecturer we could provide. He said he is open to us teaching as many or as few of the courses as we are able. He needed basic science courses for the first two years and these did not need to be taught by physicians.

I then asked him how soon he wanted to start. I was shocked when he answered, "Next month."

To be perfectly honest, I was dumbfounded. I really couldn't believe what I was hearing. The day before I was returning to America, this man calls to request I help find English speaking teachers, professors and doctors to teach and mentor six hundred medical students from closed countries. For six years!

As I sat there pondering everything, the question that I believe the Holy Spirit was asking me was this: "Will these young medical students be taught by people with no faith in Jesus Christ or will they be taught by those who love and follow the Great Physician?" As of this writing, the possibilities are still be working out.



TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

John 15:5-8

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."

Miracle Prayer

Lord, Jesus, I come before You just as I am.
I am sorry for my sins. I repent of my sins. Please forgive me.
In Your Name I forgive all others for what they have done against me.
I renounce Satan, the evil spirits and all their works.
I give You my entire self, Lord Jesus, now and forever.
I invite You into my life, Jesus. I accept You as my Lord, God and Savior.
Heal me. Change me. Strengthen me in body, soul and spirit.
Come Lord Jesus, cover me with Your Precious Blood and fill me with Your Holy Spirit!
I love You, Jesus! I praise You, Jesus! I thank You, Jesus!
I shall follow You every day of my life.
Amen.

DAY

Nineteen

Our Father who art in Heaven,
hallowed be Thy Name;
Thy Kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Amen.

Newsletter #19

One of the most significant days I've had at the Hope Medical Clinic happened the day a twenty-three year old woman named Tanya walked through our door. After taking Tanya's history my nurse, Mariana, told me, "Tanya is here to see you because she has a cervical erosion and a vaginal infection."

I replied, "Mariana, you know I have no way to do a pelvic exam or take a culture. Why didn't you explain that and then send her on her way?"

"Tanya is pregnant," Mariana continued. "Her doctor told her she must have an abortion. Please, Dr. Terry, speak with her."

"Of course, I'll speak with her," I answered.

I had come to find out that doctors here often perform a woman's first abortion without anesthetic to discourage her from getting pregnant again. Regardless, the average number of abortions a Kazakhstan woman has in her life is seven.

What does seventy years of atheistic communism do to a society?

Well, this is it.

As I entered the room where Tanya was waiting for me I prayed, "Please God, give me the wisdom and compassion I need."

The anxious young lady proceeded to tell me her story.

She had seen an obstetrician who confirmed to her that she was pregnant. Tanya was single, had no job and knew her mother would try and force her to have an abortion.

But Tanya didn't want an abortion. She understood a baby was growing inside her womb.

She discussed what she was thinking with the obstetrician who told her, "You also have a vaginal infection and a cervical erosion so the baby will most likely miscarry. You need to have the abortion before that happens."

I said to Tanya, "That doctor's advice makes no sense to me. You should not be pressured into having an abortion."

"But what if that doctor is right?" she cried. "Maybe I should have the abortion."

"Then why did you come here?" I gently inquired.

Tanya didn't answer. She just sat there with tears streaming down her cheeks. It was then that I noticed that she was wearing a Cross necklace. I gently asked her another question.

"Tanya, is that Cross you are wearing just decoration or are you a believer in Jesus?"

She squeaked out, "I'm Catholic."

"Tanya, you want to have this baby, don't you?"

Tanya started to sob. "Yes! But what can I do? My doctor says I must have an abortion!"

"Tanya, your doctor is lying to you. An infection that can easily be healed and a cervical erosion are just excuses. Your doctor twisted these things in a way to make you to think you need to abort your baby."

"Yes! I know!" she cried. "But what can I do? I want to keep my baby but I don't know how I can do that." Then Tanya began to sob again as she said, "And I don't think I could ever give my baby to someone else."

"I will do whatever I can to help you," I assured her. "I will take you to your priest. I will go to your house and talk with your mother. The one thing I won't do is lie to you. Tanya, there is absolutely no medical reason for you to have an abortion."

We cried together and then she let me pray with her. When we were done praying she asked if she could stay at the clinic until we were done seeing patients. Then she asked if Mariana would go with her to talk with her priest.

She was determined to keep her baby.

Later I had the chance to ask Mariana how Tanya had ended up coming to our clinic. She explained that Tanya had told one of her friends about her dilemma and her friend knew about us. The friend said, “Tanya, before you consider an abortion, you first need to go and talk with Doctor Terry. He is a Christian and he can help you.”

I was truly humbled when I heard this. The people of Kazakhstan are seeing a difference in the way we treat our patients. Our efforts are bringing hope. Not hope in the American doctor and nurses but in the Christian doctor and nurses.

“Dear God, help me to lead them from Doctor Terry, Christian doctor, to Christ Jesus, THE Great Physician!”



Not long after the incident in the clinic, Marina invited a close friend of hers, named Oxona, to join us in what we called a “Seekers Meeting.” Oxona was a beautiful young lady who was wheelchair bound due to spina bifida. She was also a Roman Catholic.

One of the big surprises I had when I came to Karaganda is when I found out that there is a Roman Catholic Church just a mile or so from my clinic. I was not surprised that there is an Orthodox Church and a Muslim mosque, but what in the world were Roman Catholics doing in central Asia? I found out that this is the only Roman Catholic Church in the entire nation and it’s near my clinic. This parish was founded by a Catholic priest from Poland who had attended a secret, underground seminary with a fellow student who eventually ended up becoming Pope John Paul II. When this priest was released from prison, he requested to stay in Kazakhstan because the people he led to Jesus while he was in prison would have no priest if he left.

Renee and I knew Oxona because she lived in an apartment just one floor below us. Her brother carried her, wheelchair and all, through the cold, dark stairway that led up to our apartment for the “Seekers Meeting.”

Oxona was a joyful young woman who radiated the love of Jesus. She told us that she had brought her Rosary with her and wanted to teach us how to pray it. She explained how she experienced God’s peace and power when using this simple prayer tool and promised us that we could too.

Of course, I immediately wondered how this was going to go over with my fellow Protestant missionaries!

To be totally honest, it secretly brought me great joy. What I never told any of them is that for years I had been praying the Rosary. When I was sixteen years old, I had the opportunity to worship with a group of faithful Catholic charismatics in Ann Arbor, Michigan. After that, I knew that what I had been taught about Catholics was a lie. These were people who genuinely loved the Lord Jesus. I knew they weren’t on their way to hell. As a result of that experience I wondered what else I had been told about Catholics that wasn’t true and one of my discoveries was “praying by hand” with a Rosary.

The following week Oxona returned to our meeting and this time she brought Rosaries with her to share. She ended up leading the team in praying the Rosary in Russian. My team leader is an ordained Methodist minister and afterwards he pulled me aside and challenged me for allowing this. I defended myself by showing him a picture of John Wesley’s Rosary that is kept in a museum in Cambridge.

TODAY’S SCRIPTURE

Psalm 139:13-18

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand—when I awake, I am still with you.

Miracle Prayer

Lord, Jesus, I come before You just as I am.
I am sorry for my sins. I repent of my sins. Please forgive me.
In Your Name I forgive all others for what they have done against me.
I renounce Satan, the evil spirits and all their works.
I give You my entire self, Lord Jesus, now and forever.
I invite You into my life, Jesus. I accept You as my Lord, God and Savior.
Heal me. Change me. Strengthen me in body, soul and spirit.
Come Lord Jesus, cover me with Your Precious Blood and fill me with Your Holy Spirit!
I love You, Jesus! I praise You, Jesus! I thank You, Jesus!
I shall follow You every day of my life.



DAY

Twenty

Our Father who art in Heaven,
hallowed be Thy Name;
Thy Kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Amen.

Newsletter #20

As soon as I finish my medical residency in Michigan as a young doctor, I joined an internal medicine practice in a town that had no crisis pregnancy center. This was troublesome to both Renee and I. The fact that there was no place for a woman in a crisis pregnancy to go for help was an real issue since during a pathology rotation I had to identify fetal parts after an abortion. Seeing the little arms and little legs that had been ripped off this innocent baby was is one of the most horrific things I had ever witnessed in my life. Renee and I were in agreement that something needed to be done to help as many babies and mothers as possible.

Within a few months of beginning my practice, Renee and I partnered with other pro-life Protestants and Catholics to create the Calhoun County Crisis Pregnancy Center. Renee was a counselor. At the time we could never have imagined that God was preparing her to one day help post-abortion women in Kazakhstan.

It was during the time when Renee was working at the crisis pregnancy center that she started having neurological problems. We could not get to the bottom of this in Michigan so we eventually ended up in Rochester, Minnesota at the Mayo Clinic. After all her test results came through we were told she either has complicated migraines or Multiple Sclerosis.

Over the years Renee's symptoms fluctuated. By the time we were called to Kazakhstan, her specialists decided the off-again-on-again symptoms were not associated with M.S. Since I was a doctor, her doctor gave Renee the green light to go to Kazakhstan. We were soon to find out that the doctors had been wrong. In all fairness, M.S. can be a very tricky condition to diagnose.

About six months after arriving in Kazakhstan, Renee started experiencing new neurological symptoms that were progressively worsening. It started with her inability to walk normally due to numbness in her leg and progressed to the point where she was completely bedridden. We both realized at that point that what she was experiencing was M.S.

I started to question why God would send Renee all the way to Kazakhstan to serve Him and then make it impossible for her to do so. I actually began to feel frustrated and angry towards God. "I came here to help suffering people not to watch my wife suffer like this!"

After three weeks of Renee being unable to walk, my frustration hit a peak. It was summer and our apartment had reached 110° inside. Kazakhstan is a country of extremes. Never in my life have I felt so cold during the winter and never so hot during the summer. I have observed that Renee's symptoms become worse when she is overheated. I knew if there was a way to cool down the apartment it would help her to feel better. I have seen it happen that a drop in temperature actually helps her symptoms go away. However, the water and electricity were both out and there were no available air conditioners.

At around 11pm that night, the electricity and water BOTH came on at the same time. Around here that is equivalent to a holiday! I jumped up out of bed, ran to the kitchen and started washing the dirty dishes that had been left for several days. That is how long we had been without either water or electricity.

I was tired and feeling very depressed about Renee's condition. I had the idea to take advantage of having electricity by turning on some praise and worship music. I thought it might help lift my spirit and also help me to pray. So there I was, doing the dishes and trying to pray as the clock inched towards midnight. At one point I just started weeping and begging God to please...Please! Please give us an air conditioner! I tried to explain to God that an air conditioner would make all the difference because it would cool our apartment down and then Renee would get better.

I clearly heard God speak to my heart and He said I should not ask Him for an air conditioner. He wanted me to pray for a change of weather.

Yes, I'm going to admit it for all the world to read that I started arguing with God.

"But I don't want to pray for a change of weather. I want an air conditioner! If the weather changes, it will just change back. If I have an air conditioner then I can be in control of turning it off and on!"

I heard the Lord laugh.

I instantly understood what He meant. He was saying, “Why do you want an air conditioner when most of the time you don’t have any electricity?”

Let me pause here and say that it best not to continue in an argument with God because He is always right. “Okay, Lord. I’ll do it Your way. Please change the weather to cool things down so Renee can get better.”

After the dishes were done I went to bed even more discouraged because the weather had not changed and it seemed ever hotter to me now.

As I climbed into bed I began to complain to Renee. I explained how God told me he wasn’t going to give us an air conditioner and that I should pray that He changes the weather.

“Well, I prayed and He hasn’t changed anything!”

As soon as those words came out of my mouth, a huge wind suddenly came that blew the fan on the window sill off the ledge. The fan ended up landing on my belly! Then Renee and I started hearing glass breaking. I flew out of bed and ran to the window where I could see the courtyard. Windows were literally shattering before my eyes due to the intense wind. It was like a mini-tornado! Dust was flying! I could hear people waking up and yelling! Then the temperature started dropping.

Significantly.

Like a lot.

I poked me head out the window and yelled in English, “I’m sorry! I only did what God asked me to do! I shouldn’t have prayed so hard!”

It didn’t make any difference. They didn’t understand English and they couldn’t hear me anyway because of the noise the wind was creating. But I felt better after apologizing. I wasn’t so much apologizing to my neighbors but to God. He knew it would impress me much more to watch Him change the weather then to give me an air conditioner in a country where A/C’s were basically obsolete.

And He was right.

It greatly impressed me.

The next morning, after spending the rest of the night with cool air filling the apartment, Renee got out of bed and walked by herself for the first time in three weeks. This didn't last for long because eventually the temperature rose again into the triple digits. But Renee and I were at peace this time. We understood without a doubt that God knew exactly where we were and what we were facing. He wanted to make sure we got the memo.

We got it.

God had not made a mistake when He called both Renee and I to Kazakhstan. Renee's M.S. had not taken Him by surprise. His plans are not our plans. His are always better.

FROM RENEE:

When we were in Atbasar I had some time to cross-stitch. I had brought a book of patterns with me but then decided that I would "sew as I go" with this project. What I ended up with surprised me a little. I stitched: "Hope in nothing but the Blood of Jesus." I decided it is going to go up on the wall in our living room in Karaganda. I wondered why God had inspired me with those particular words. It didn't take me too long to find out.

It has been about ten years now since I was first diagnosed with having some sort of neurological issues. My symptoms get worse in the summer and often times I have problems specifically with the left side of my body. Terry and I knew it was a possibility that I could have some health issues while here in Kazakhstan but we went ahead with our plans.

God had made it very clear that this is the place in which He had called us. We know that it wasn't "an oversight" on His part! He knew about my physical condition and most importantly He knew how He would use it. I have come to realize through my M.S. what it means to "walk by faith." There are times I can't feel my foot on the floor but I know it is there. So it might look a little odd when I walk because I have to actually swing my foot out in front of me to take a step but the important thing is I just keep on walking the best I can.

Another thing I've learned is that I never know how my disability will minister to others. I remember a time when Terry and I spoke at a Missions Conference back home in the United States. Afterwards a woman came up to me and said, "I know I have been called to be a missionary but I have been giving God all kinds of excuses why I can't go. Now after hearing your story and I watching you walk, I realize I have no more excuses. I am going to say "yes" to my call."

Honestly, there are times I feel so small and so unworthy to be doing anything for our Lord here in Kazakhstan, especially when I see some of the amazing ways He is working. But here I am. I realize the Lord will use anything that is surrendered to Him for His glory... nothing is wasted, absolutely nothing!

Now we had been back from our trip to Atbasar for a couple days when the left side of my body decided that is just wasn't going to do what I wanted it to do. I was having trouble walking and I was feeling greatly fatigued. This is not something new for me but the people here had never seen me in this state before. I've had to start using a cane to get around the apartment and because we live on the sixth floor with no working elevator, I'm pretty much stuck here.

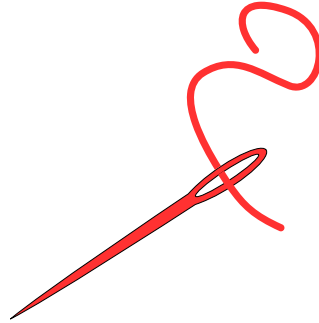
What was a challenge for me was that the very people I thought I was sent to minister to ended up ministering to me! At first I thought God had it backwards. However, I soon understood that it was actually a surprise for the people of Kazakhstan to see Americans suffer. Remember, they know that we can leave and go back home to America whenever we want. People here often ask us why we came to Kazakhstan in the first place when they are trying to find a way to leave! What an amazing opportunity to share how God had not forgotten them. He had sent us all the way to Kazakhstan to tell them that He loves them.

There is a popular song that often comes to mind. It has taken on a whole new meaning since coming to Kazakhstan. The lyrics are, "Here I am Lord. Is it I Lord? I have heard you calling in the night. I will go Lord, if you lead me. I will hold Your people in my heart." One of the things God has taught me is that when I can't walk and have to stay put, I now have more time to pray. I have had some wonderful days with the Lord this summer. I knew before Terry and I arrived that one of my most important jobs would be to support my husband in prayer because he would be the one on the front line of the battle. It is one thing to pray and trust that God will hear your prayer and answer. It is altogether another thing to pray and then see almost immediate answers to those prayers.

What a blessing to know that we have a Heavenly Father who is intimately concerned about everything that touches our lives. To pray about specific needs and then to watch His mighty hand at work taking care of things is an amazing thing to see. If it takes the left side of my body to not work so I can spend more time in prayer then so be it. Let me tell you, it's worth it!

As I have been praying this summer, the words of the cross-stitch: "Hope in nothing but the Blood of Jesus," often flood my mind along with the song: "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' Blood and righteousness."

I tend to be a private person when it comes to talking about my health struggles but I think that the Lord would like me to be open and to share this. I want the world to know that even though I often struggle with a body that doesn't work very well, I have a joy and peace in my heart because my hope is in God and in Him alone!



TODAY'S SCRIPTURE
John 19:31-37

Since it was the Day of Preparation, to prevent bodies from remaining on the cross on the Sabbath day (for that Sabbath day was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Therefore the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was dead already, they did not break His legs. However, one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. He who saw it has testified, and his testimony is true. He knows that he is telling the truth, that you may believe. For these things happened so that the Scripture should be fulfilled, "Not one of His bones shall be broken," and again another Scripture says, "They shall look on Him whom they have pierced."

Miracle Prayer

Lord, Jesus, I come before You just as I am.
I am sorry for my sins. I repent of my sins. Please forgive me.
In Your Name I forgive all others for what they have done against me.
I renounce Satan, the evil spirits and all their works.
I give You my entire self, Lord Jesus, now and forever.
I invite You into my life, Jesus. I accept You as my Lord, God and Savior.
Heal me. Change me. Strengthen me in body, soul and spirit.
Come Lord Jesus, cover me with Your Precious Blood and fill me with Your Holy Spirit!
I love You, Jesus! I praise You, Jesus! I thank You, Jesus!
I shall follow You every day of my life.
Amen.

DAY

Twenty-one

Our Father who art in Heaven,
hallowed be Thy Name;
Thy Kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Amen.

Newsletter #21

There are a few more exciting things Renee and I want to share with you before we wrap up our final Kazakhstan newsletter. The first concerns a man named Ed Bos from Worldwide Lab who was recently here with us in Karaganda. His visit meant we now have a brand new lab for our clinic and mobile medical unit. Besides installing the new lab, Ed also trained local medical personnel on how to use the lab equipment and how to repair anything that should break or malfunction.

As soon as Ed left to go back to the United States, Walt Roberts arrived to further the installation of the CT Scanner. He just about had it up and running when a small fire in the equipment caused another delay. Walt was unable to fix the problem on this visit but he has assured me that he'll return as soon as possible with the things necessary to get the CT Scanner up and running.

Traveling with Walt was Dr. Mark Tullos and his family. I will be handing the baton over to Dr. Tullos. It's a strange feeling to be typing that last sentence: "I will be handing the baton over to Dr. Tullos." Let me briefly share with you why I am now handing the "Kazakhstan Doctor Baton" over to Dr. Tullos.

Renee and I were invited to attend the Mission Society board meeting being held near Atlanta, Georgia. I took advantage of this opportunity to present two papers I had been working on. I proposed a big change to our Mission Society's philosophy concerning medical missions. In a nutshell, the change would focus more on preventative medicine and integrating our medical work with the other community development efforts that we are already engaged in.

I'm happy to report that the Mission Society board enthusiastically accepted the proposal!

I was then commissioned by the board to help craft and lead a team of specialists to help make the proposal a reality. The plan is to form a holistic approach for our global mission outreach. This would include Medicine, English and Literacy Training, Agriculture, Micro-enterprise, Church Leadership Training and Child Advocacy. The name of our group is called the Global Resource Team. My new responsibilities will include being the Medical Director. With this change, Renee and I are no longer assigned to the Kazakhstan mission field. This does not mean we are no longer missionaries. It means that instead of being assigned to one field of work (Kazakhstan), our mission has now been expanded to include the whole world!

During our final days as Kazakhstan missionaries, Renee received a phone call from a woman desperately wanting to talk with her concerning a relative. Her relative was a young man and he was in trouble. After hearing more about the situation, Renee told the woman she would be willing to talk with this young man. Two days later he showed up at our apartment for his appointment and we had also arranged for a wonderful Christian translator to be present at the meeting.

As Renee spoke with this young man through the translator for nearly an hour, it became apparent that he was really hurting. At one point he told Renee, "I just want to be good but I can't seem to do it!" He went on to explain that the more he tried, the worse things got.

Renee told him that his problem was not a new one. She then asked if he understood that he didn't have to live life all on his own but that Jesus was waiting for the invitation to enter his life. The Lord wanted to help him. The young man admitted to Renee that he had heard this before but wasn't sure that he believed it. Renee assured him that if there was anything in the world that he could believe, this was it! She then shared with him some of her own personal experiences when the Lord was there to help her, most especially at times when things seemed hopeless. After talking more with the young man, she asked if he would like to pray and ask Jesus to come into the situation and help him.

"Yes, I'd like that," he said.

Then the young man bowed his head and prayed with Renee that Jesus would come into his life and help him be the man that he was created to be.

Then from under his tear-streaked face for the first time came a big, beautiful smile! Renee told me that for as long as she lives, she doesn't think she will ever forget the smile on that boy's face.

Renee and I have just one question for you as we wrap up our final newsletter and the question is, "Are you ready to begin a new adventure with Jesus today?"

Just one last word of advice: Don't ever say, "I'm only going to do it if I see a nine foot tall Jesus walking on the water."

That doesn't work.

Dr. Terry and Renee Wortz
Final newsletter: January 1, 2000



EPILOGUE

As one of five sons of an Assemblies of God pastor, my family was always the first ones to arrive at the church and the last ones to leave. I have always understood that Jesus loves me and wants to have a close relationship with me.

I have vivid memory of being at the Grand Ledge, Michigan Assemblies of God Church when I was a nine-year-old. After the sermon, I went up to the kneeling rail with those who “wanted to have more of Jesus in their lives.” It was then, although I honestly wasn’t certain what it was at the time, that I received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I also remember that my older brother Dale had not yet received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I heard him praying and pleading with God that if Terry, his little brother, was loved enough to receive this gift, that as a 12-year-old he wanted to receive it too.

The Assemblies of God does not believe in infant baptism. I was dedicated to the Lord as an infant as were most of the members of our church. Baptism with water was only for people who had a personal encounter with Jesus or a conversion of life. Then they would ask for water baptism.

After receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit, I asked my father if I could be baptized with water. He told me that I was too young. My nine-year old brain reasoned with him that if I was not too young to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit then I wasn’t too young to be baptized with water. I told him that God had accepted me and was living in me. Even at a young age I was able to hear God communicating with me in that still small voice in my heart. This was an argument my father could not dispute and decided to allow me to be baptized with my older brother.

As a member of the Assemblies of God, I was taught that you could tell who is a Christian by their deeds. However, it was not so much what they did do but what they did not do. I was taught that Christians did not go to movie theaters, did not play cards, did not smoke and did not drink alcohol. Christian women did not use makeup and did not wear pants. Also, one of the prohibited activities was dancing of any kind. When I was an eighth-grader, I was voted Vice President of my class. Because of this I was expected to attend my 8th grade school dance. My father reluctantly gave me permission to go after I promised that I would not dance. I would just hang out by the snacks and talk with my friends. While at the dance, I saw a girl who went to my church that I thought was rather cute. I was really surprised when she walked up to me and invited me to dance with her. I explained that if we danced it would be a sin and we would go to hell. She retorted back that it wasn’t true, that dancing was not a sin, that it was a lot of fun and that God hadn’t struck her down for doing it. She was so convincing that I decided to accept her invitation. And it was fun! When the song was over I was still perfectly alive and did not feel the least bit separated from Jesus or convicted by the Holy Spirit that I had sinned grievously.

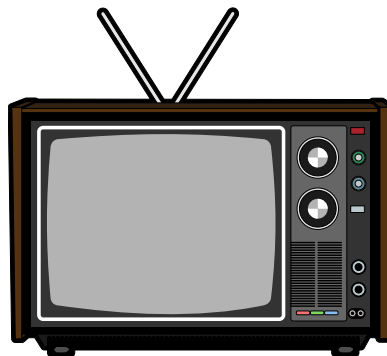
It was then that I realized that I had been lied to.

That experience drove me into a period of trying to figure out what really was a sin and what wasn't. I concluded that the Assemblies of God did not have all of the answers. I realized other Christians did not believe things I had been taught. Rather than rebelling against Christ, my search brought me closer to Him. I studied the Bible more than ever as I tried to figure out what really pleased Christ and what were the things that truly displeased Him. I was hungry for the truth!

At that young age I started to believe that there was no real body of Christ on earth but that this is only a metaphor for a universal group of people who had similar experiences concerning Christ. Because they were all from different denominations, they believed different things about Jesus. It was like the parable of the three blind men who are trying to describe an elephant. The one who felt the trunk believed that the elephant was like a snake. The one who felt the ears believed that the elephant was like a large plant. The one who felt the tail believed that the elephant was like a rope. I figured that the Holy Spirit would have to sort everything out regarding what really was true and what wasn't.

I have a memory around this time of trying to speak to a drunken man about Jesus. He told me that he was a Baptist. He said that the Baptist Church was the true church because it was the very first church. This puzzled me since I knew that the Baptist Church was formed after the Reformation so I question him about it. He said the Baptist Church was formed by John the Baptist and since John was born before Jesus the Baptist Church was the first and true church. I didn't argue with the man since he was drunk. Besides, according to my upbringing, being drunk proved he wasn't a Christian at all. But I did find his reasoning quite amusing.

One of my desires at that age was to be allowed to see the end of the "Wizard of Oz." Growing up, the "Wizard of Oz" was only telecast once a year and it was always on a Sunday night. We always had to leave for church about the time the flying monkeys made their appearance. If I faked being sick, my dad would tell me that church is the place I needed to be so they could pray for my healing. I never did find out what happened after the flying monkeys until I went away to college. It wasn't until then that I could skip going back to church on a Sunday night in order to see the end of the movie.



Somewhere along the line I picked up on the teaching of “the total depravity of man” although at the time I did not understand what it was called. I thought that if this were true then I was completely incapable of pleasing God. This caused me to become very depressed. I asked my oldest brother, who had just returned home from a college break, what I should do about my problem. His exact words were, “Man, I don’t know what to tell you. Just read the Bible!” So I opened up my Bible and started reading the book of Romans. I will never forget what happened when I got to the passage that said, “And we know that all things work together for good to those that love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” (Romans 8:28) I heard the voice of Jesus speaking in my heart telling me that He was so powerful that He could make even the wrong things that I do turn out for good if I gave them to Him and asked for forgiveness. I told Him if you really are that powerful then you are my God and I will serve you the rest of my life. I finished reading the book of Romans and realized I was completely at peace for the first time in many months.

Then someone at my church decided to start a study group on cults. We studied about Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses, Seventh-day Adventists and Catholics. Yes, I was taught that the Church of Rome was the whore of Babylon and that the Pope was the Antichrist. My grandfather used to call the tail end of a turkey “the Pope’s nose” and when a cousin, who I loved dearly, told us she was marrying a Catholic, my grandmother told her she would rather see her dead.

One Sunday, when I was 16 years old, I was reading the religious section of the newspaper. There was an article that told about a group of Catholic charismatics that were meeting at a place that eventually grew to become Christ the King Catholic Church in Ann Arbor, Michigan. This completely puzzled me because, as I shared earlier, I had been taught that the Catholic Church was a cult. I felt convicted that I needed to see what was going on there for myself. My father gave me permission to drive to Ann Arbor, which was only about 45 minutes from where we lived, on one condition: that a board member from our church went with me. The board member that my dad chose was a former Catholic who had been “saved” from the Catholic Church. When he and I arrived at the meeting place, I could not believe my eyes and my ears. I saw priests and nuns and men in monk habits. I saw guys with beards and blue jeans and girls with long hair and love beads. Everyone was singing the same praise music that I sang. They were worshiping Jesus just like I did. This was a Cornelius experience in reverse for me. I knew that I knew in my heart and in my spirit that these people loved Jesus just like me. They knew him in the same way I did. And I also understood that the Presence of Jesus was in the Catholic Church in a thing that looked like a little box.

I came home from Ann Arbor and reported what I had seen and heard to my father and mother. They became very excited because in their minds all of these people could leave the Catholic Church and be free from the cult since now they had truly experienced Jesus. My response was quite different. I realized, once again, that I had been taught things that were not true. I concluded that Christianity did not begin at the Azusa Street Revival in the early 1900's but that it started in 33 AD on the day of Pentecost and continues to this present day.

After my encounter with the Catholic charismatics my worldview was destroyed. I became even more acutely aware that Christians who did love Jesus and were claiming to hear from the Holy Spirit were interpreting passages from the scriptures very different from me. Many times their interpretations were diametrically opposed to what I had been taught. How could we both be right? How do I know whose understanding is correct?

So I became a student of Church history and the Early Church Fathers. You may have heard it said that if you do not want to be led into the Catholic Church then do not study the history of the Early Church. Of course, I didn't know that at the time I started studying the Early Church Fathers. But it is true. A serious, open-mind, open-heart study of the Early Church will eventually bring you to that conclusion. For 40 years I wandered in the wilderness, searching to find the Promised Land, the church that Jesus said he would build and the gates of hell would not prevail against. And that church is the Catholic Church. She is the sinless one made up of sinners.

In the church I grew up in we had a memorial communion service. They did not teach the Real Presence of Christ in the bread and wine. In my reading, I discovered that the early Church believed in the Real Presence of Christ, the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus, in the Holy Eucharist from the very beginning. As an adult, I would sometimes "sneak" into Catholic Masses early on Sunday mornings before my wife and children would be ready to go to the Protestant Church. This went on for a long time and I guess you would have had to label me "a closet Catholic."

After Renee returned home to the United States from Kazakhstan and me from the world-wide mission field, I began practicing internal medicine again in Michigan. This time I was offered a position in a Catholic hospital and I soon became the primary doctor for a whole lot of retired nuns, some of the active priests and even the bishops of the diocese. This gave me wonderful opportunities to talk with them about the Catholic Church. I would often listen to EWTN and in particular "The Journey Home" with Marcus Grodi's interviews on the Coming Home Network.

One day the bishop of the diocese, Bishop Paul Bradley, who was one of my patients, point-blank asked me what was keeping me from becoming Catholic. I explained to him that the obstacle was my family. It would be especially devastating to my 80-year-old father who was a high-ranking Assemblies of God minister. I told him that Jesus knew my heart but I felt I couldn't come into the Catholic Church while my father was still alive. Bishop Bradley agreed that out of respect to my father I should wait until he passed away. As my father aged, he never gave up his ministry and until the very end of his life was still teaching Bible classes to older adults. My father eventually passed away. After his death, I went to Bishop Bradley and told him I was ready to enter the Catholic Church.

My dear wife Renee was not ready or even interested in entering the Catholic Church with me. The Bishop assured me that I could attend Mass on Sundays and also continue to go with her to the Protestant Church to worship together. He then assigned me a spiritual director to be my mentor. I remember at one point my spiritual director asked me, "Why do you really want to enter the Catholic Church?" I explained, "It's not because you have better preaching. It's not because you have more lively music. But where else can I go to receive Jesus in the Holy Eucharist?" Then he said to me, "You're ready. Welcome!"

After that I was able to joyously go to my first Confession, receive my first Holy Communion and then Confirmation!

The year I came into the Catholic Church was the year that Easter landed on my birthday. When my mother asked me what gift she could give me, I told her I would like her to attend the Sunday Easter morning Mass at our Cathedral with me. And to my great surprise and joy, she did. When Mass was over, my mother was amazed. She didn't understand exactly what had happened but she thought it was beautiful. She had a definite "softening of the heart" towards Catholics after her Mass experience. I think Fulton Sheen's quote sums it up nicely: "There are not one hundred people in the United States who hate the Catholic Church but there are millions who hate what they wrongly perceive the Catholic Church to be."

My coming into the Catholic Church would have been even more joyful if Renee would have joined me but she was not even close. She insisted I attend Mass out of town so nobody would recognize me. She did not want the rumor mill to start people gossiping about me becoming a Catholic. Occasionally she would attend Mass with me and I would try to make her "cheat sheets" so she could follow along. I eventually discovered a wonderful publication called *The Magnificat* which made it easier for her to understand what was going on during the Mass.

Catholics would probably not understand that when most Protestants come to Mass for the first time it would be the equivalent of a Catholic entering a mosque and trying to figure out what was happening. To the eyes of many Protestants, Catholic worship appears foreign and exclusive. The Protestant worship culture places a high emphasis on welcoming the un-churched while Catholic culture is focused on the members they already have. Catholics are not expecting non-Catholics to attend Mass. My observation is that this results in the Protestants excelling in evangelization but not in discipleship and the Catholics excelling in wisdom and sound teaching but not evangelization.

Knowing that it was the Holy Spirit who had to draw Renee to the Catholic Church, I focused my efforts on simply praying for her. Since practicing medicine in Michigan, it became a habit to relax in my hot tub at the end of a busy day. I would spend up to an hour in prayer as I let the cares of the day melt away. After becoming Catholic, I would spend my “hot tub time” praying the Rosary for my wife, asking the Holy Spirit to lead her to the Catholic Church. Eventually the news began to get around that “Dr. Terry had become a Catholic!” So Renee and I decided we should probably meet with the pastor of the Protestant church to explain our situation with him in person. I told him that I was now Catholic and attending Mass but that I was also coming here with my wife so we could worship God together. His reaction was interesting. He was so completely taken aback that he exclaimed, “Dr. Terry, I wish you would have told me you were gay because then I would know what to do! But I don’t have any idea what to do about this!”

After taking a few weeks to think about it, the pastor decided that I would no longer be welcome to participate in worship with my wife in their church. This was a real shock to Renee and to our friends at this church. I think because of how this man handled the situation, he was eventually dismissed from his position as the pastor.

I’ll let Renee pick up what happened from here:

I had understood for quite a long time that Terry had an interest and eventually a real love for the Catholic Church. This was very foreign to me because it went against what I had been taught growing up. However, I knew that God was in this situation. For nearly forty years I had trusted my husband as a wonderful partner and guide and now I had a hard decision to make. Could I continue to trust him? It was at this point that I had an understanding while praying that to not follow Terry and be united with him in this decision would be displeasing to Jesus. That understanding made a real impact on me! I prayed, “Lord if this is really You encouraging me to come along with Terry, please make it very clear. Please, Jesus, make my eyes see what I have never seen before, make my ears hear things I’ve never heard before and may it all be the truth!”

I then called St. Ann's Catholic Church in Richland, Michigan where Terry was a member and asked when their next RCIA classes were. The woman who answered the phone said they started next week! That was my first sign. I told her to please put my name on the list. She was very happy to do so. What I found out at my first class was there was only one other person in the class besides me. That made for an intense, almost one-on-one learning experience with an amazing RCIA teacher. I discovered my classmate was a woman who raised Alpacas. Terry and I had a herd of 22 llamas before we left to become medical missionaries to Kazakhstan so my new friend and I had much to discuss: llamas and Jesus!

But God wasn't through with my surprises! When I had a chance to get to know the priest at St. Ann's, I found out that he had been baptized a Catholic as an infant but then his family left the Catholic Church and joined the Assemblies of God! He even went to an Assemblies of God school but after his graduation God led him back to the Catholic Church. From there he eventually discovered his vocation as a Catholic priest. His family also came back to the Catholic Church. The Lord in His goodness "hand picked" this priest just for me. Father understood my background and was a real comfort to me. And then I found out that the deacon assigned to St. Ann's was a man that I had been on a double date with many years ago! My best friend went with him and I went with his younger brother. What a small world! He and I were both surprised and delighted to reconnect.

Another surprise was I remembered I had actually been a bridesmaid in a wedding that took place at St. Ann's 40 years earlier. It was the one and only time in my life that I had stepped foot inside a Catholic Church until I went to Mass with Terry. It was during this time period that Terry and I were looking through some old photo albums. He spied a picture of me wearing my bridesmaid dress standing next to a statue of Mary. "That's the same statue in St. Ann's!" he exclaimed. When I saw the picture it all came back to me.

So there were many surprises that God had planned out just for me. He tailored perfectly every single detail of my journey into the Catholic Church. I guess you can say I have come full circle in my worship. I never could understand how someone could worship God quietly. Worship to me meant praising God with my hands raised high and singing lively, heart-felt songs. I walk into the Catholic Church in the town where I now live and I experience a sense of great reverence. The quiet lends itself to my great anticipation of receiving my Lord Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. He is worth everything that I have ever given up. He is the Pearl of great price.

So that is how two Protestant medical missionaries to Kazakhstan after the dissolution of the Soviet Union eventually found their way into the Catholic Church.

We end this twenty-one day journey with you by expressing our gratitude to Our Lord Jesus for all the amazing ways He has worked and will continue to work in each one of our lives. Let us never tire in our mission: to love Him and to make Him loved!

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Matthew 28:1-10

After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you." So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

The Great Commission

Matthew 28:16-20

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. "

Miracle Prayer

Lord, Jesus, I come before You just as I am.
I am sorry for my sins. I repent of my sins. Please forgive me.
In Your Name I forgive all others for what they have done against me.
I renounce Satan, the evil spirits and all their works.
I give You my entire self, Lord Jesus, now and forever.
I invite You into my life, Jesus. I accept You as my Lord, God and Savior.
Heal me. Change me. Strengthen me in body, soul and spirit.
Come Lord Jesus, cover me with Your Precious Blood and fill me with Your Holy Spirit!
I love You, Jesus! I praise You, Jesus! I thank You, Jesus!
I shall follow You every day of my life.
Amen.



Today's date

“For we are co-workers in God’s service”
1 Corinthians 3:9

Mr. and Mrs.

WORTZ



DR. TERRY & RENEE



With Father Dufner

To love Him and to make Him loved
MISSION

A 21 DAY PERSONAL RETREAT TO CHANGE THE WORLD



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