

Last summer I had the pleasure of joining God in what He was doing as a co-leader on a short term mission's trip to Cayambe, Ecuador. My team from Spanish Fort (AL) United Methodist joined Gulf Shores and Orange Beach United Methodist Church to conduct a Bible school for approximately 180 kids, 4 to 9 years of age. At the same time we were constructing the third floor of a building next to a local church to provide more space for these kids and their teachers.

We left Pensacola airport in late May under the short-term mission's organizational management of SIFAT based in Lineville, Alabama. SIFAT had joined Compassion International that was already working the Cayambe project. During the course of the construction a piece of concrete flew into my eyes and the right eye grew steadily worse despite my attempts to wash both my eyes out.

After the engineer from SIFAT called SIFAT headquarters in Quito and described my symptoms, the word came down from Dr. Roberto, head of SIFAT in Ecuador. He was very concerned and stated that I must seek medical help immediately. Edwin, the project engineer, and Monica, a friend from Peru, took me to the nearest doctor. Now Cayambe is a small country town about an hour outside Quito and the only doctor in town was a maternity doctor. When I went in to the doctor's office, there was nothing but pregnant women in the lobby. Monica spoke perfect Spanish to the receptionist telling her that the busy American must see the doctor immediately. I did not think anyone understood English in that lobby but when Edwin pointed to me and said "Arnold Schwarzenegger" and held out my big stomach rubbing it with both hands and I replied "yes, I think it is twins". The whole lobby of pregnant women busted out laughing. It was embarrassing enough to be rushed in front of these women based on the fact I was busy. I was busy alright. I was trying to make it back to lunch on time. I believe God has a sense of humor and was laughing also. The doctor prescribed some medication and told Edwin and Monica the news. It was very bad and I must see an eye specialist.

There just so happened to be an eye specialist coming the next day to Cayambe. When I went to the lobby, I was relieved not to see all those pregnant women again. Still the busy American was rushed in to see the doctor. I was wondering about how my medical insurance was going to pay for these visits when I saw the rates (\$.25 for 5 minutes and as much as \$1.25 for half an hour). No waiting and no high doctor bills. This was better than America. So I went in to see the doctor with Monica who could translate Spanish for me. He ... was a very small man. I remember he had to sit up on a cushion to peer into my eye with an orthoscope. He was speaking in Spanish the entire time and Monica was translating to me when suddenly he said in perfect English, "this is going to hurt a lot." I wished at that moment he could not speak in English. He took some special tongs and removed a piece of concrete in my eye. He then peered into my eye with some other equipment and drew a picture of my eye showing a long laceration across the cornea with a sizeable ulceration underneath. He said he wanted me to show this to the doctor when I got on the next plane back to the states. He could not tell if the ulceration underneath was bacterial or viral. Suddenly things seemed more serious than I dreamed or imagined but I knew who to talk to. Monica and I prayed again for my eye to be healed.

I got back to the job site and Dr. Roberto had talked to Edwin my

little eye doctor. He said for me to consider leaving immediately because this could lead to losing my sight in one eye. At this point I was wearing dark sunglasses as any light was painful but I had a peace about staying with my group until we went home together. Dr. Roberto said if I wanted to stick it out with my group that under no circumstances was I to venture outside on the construction site. I had no problem with that since just a little dust outside was painfully irritating to my eyes at that point.

One of the prescriptions the eye specialist gave me was a thick paste. How was I to squeeze this from a tube into my eye? Then God sent an angel. We had an angel on our team named Robbie Dunham who just so happened to be an RN with over 30 years of experience. Do you believe in circumstances that just happen by chance or do you believe God is in control and already knows everything that will happen to you? She administered the prescription right there on the job-site. I was told that an additional condition was required if I wanted to stay with my team. I was to see this same doctor tomorrow. Now the doctor only came to Cayambe once a week at the most. How was I to stay with my team if he was not in Cayambe?

Well, I will tell you. The eye specialist was based in Otavalo. The next day was our day off and guess where my team was going. We were going to Otavalo. My faith was being strengthened. I knew that as I acknowledged God He would direct my path. I thanked him for healing my eye. I had a peace about my situation and I was enjoying another adventure with my Lord. We all got on the bus that Saturday morning and my eye was feeling better. The bus dropped me off with Monica at a street near the doctor's office. I was glad Monica was there. We went straight to the doctor's office. The busy American got ushered right in to see the doctor per his instructions to the receptionist. When I walked into his office I was impressed with all the equipment he had. He climbed up on his cushion so he could peer into my eye again. He looked quite perplexed. He kept on examining me and looking and looking. I was starting to get worried. He would speak in Spanish and Monica would speak back but they forgot to include me on the conversation. He was looking at me straight in the face wondering if I was that same crazy American he saw yesterday while Monica was praising God doing some sort of Indian dance celebration. I was wondering what was going on but I knew how my eye felt and I knew my Lord. Monica said the doctor could not find anything wrong with my eye. He explained that the eye healed very quickly but could not find the trace of the laceration or ulceration underneath. I do not think the doctor was a believer but I remember the almost comical look on his very perplexed face. He had a crazy women dancing in his office with what appeared to be a twin brother of an American he saw yesterday. I did point to my stomach at the maternity doctor's office earlier and said, "twins". I was so happy to know that God was using me to witness to this doctor.

There are many more stories I could tell of the opposition we encountered and the blessings of leaving our comfort zone in the States and going on a short term mission trip. Dewey and I were called team leaders but the Lord Jesus Christ was the real team leader of our small group. We all came home more appreciative and compassionate than when we left. My eye was not the only one healed on this trip. My whole team's eyes were healed and opened in some way on this trip. The blessing is in direct proportion to the opposition.