

SIMPSON ⁵

Making Disciples Among the People of Honduras

May 2017

Praise the Lord, my soul,
and forget not all his benefits—
who forgives all your sins
and heals all your diseases,
who redeems your life from the pit
and crowns you with love and compassion,
who satisfies your desires with good things
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Psalm 103:2-5



God is good. I'm convinced of that. But his goodness isn't necessarily U.S.-middle-class comfort. I think the expression of his goodness toward us is more focused on our being, our becoming, who he desires us to be. That often means hardship, not cruel or ruthless but the kind of trial that stretches, strengthens and grows, like how a physical exercise breaks down the body to build it up again.

The past 6 years of my life have been an experience of God's goodness expressed in such a way. Under the pressure of hurt and loss and waiting he has sustained me, upholding me from within through his Spirit and shoring me up from the outside through family and friends like you.

Throughout the past year and a half, I have experienced much healing. My body and emotions have begun to be built up again. My body has recovered from stress and neglect. I have lost 50 pounds. I'm sleeping well, eating well and exercising regularly. My emotions have been restored. I'm no longer emotionally numb. And, although I still wrestle at times with anger, overall I am much better.

During this time of healing God brought a wonderful lady into my life. She, too, is an expression of God's great goodness to me. Her name is Fany (pronounced "Fa" as in Do, Re, Mi, Fa + "knee"). One afternoon a year ago we met for coffee. We have become good friends and, as they say, have fallen in love. We have talked, prayed and dreamed. We have decided to marry.

20-second summary

On February 26 Fany and I were married. Now we are 5: Peter, Fany, Marissa, Jayden and Carlitos.

We are planning on making a short trip to the States this summer to visit family, churches and teach at a church camp.

Please pray for the legal process for getting the permissions for my family to travel.

Your missionaries with

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Window on Honduran culture: What does it take to get married in Honduras?

Just say, “I do” right? That’s all. Well, some things just aren’t that easy.

In Honduras, ordained pastors do not have the authority of the state to marry. In fact, the only legally recognized marriage is officiated by a lawyer. As a result, many couples tend to celebrate two weddings: a civil wedding and a church wedding. The civil wedding most frequently occurs in the municipal building officiated by someone from the municipal government. But it is also possible to hire a lawyer for a private, civil wedding. Then, after that wedding, sometimes just a few minutes or more normally a week or two, the couple has a “church” wedding officiated by a pastor.

If that wasn’t complicated enough, the following documents had to be provided to the lawyer prior to the civil wedding:

- Color copies of the national id cards for Fany, our two witnesses and me
- Color copies of Fany’s parents’ national id cards
- Color copies of my parents’ passports
- Official copies of our birth certificates (Mine had to be validated in the U.S. with an apostille.)
- HIV test results for each of us
- Receipt showing that the marriage fee was paid
- Receipt showing that municipal taxes are paid to date
- Each of us had to provide documents that substantiated that we are single and are free to marry. (I had to go the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa to get mine—a 2-hour drive to the south. Fany had to get hers in San Pedro Sula—a 2-hour drive to the north.)
- Fany had to provide a document that proved that we were not close family. Fortunately, I was not required to do so.
- Each of us had to submit a criminal history report.

Cue the music... “Isn’t it romantic...”

Not only do you have to be committed to the person you are going to marry, but you must be committed to marriage. If not, you would not invest the time and resources necessary to gather all those documents.

Well, after turning in all those documents to the lawyer, we were married in a small, civil wedding ceremony on February 26. On “my side” my mom and stepdad, my aunt and uncle and a few coworkers were there.



My best friend was my witness and his wife was the lawyer that officiated the ceremony. Fany's immediate family and a couple of her friends were able to celebrate with us. We are legally married. But, untraditionally, there will be a couple months between our two weddings. We will be having our church wedding here in Honduras on May 27th.

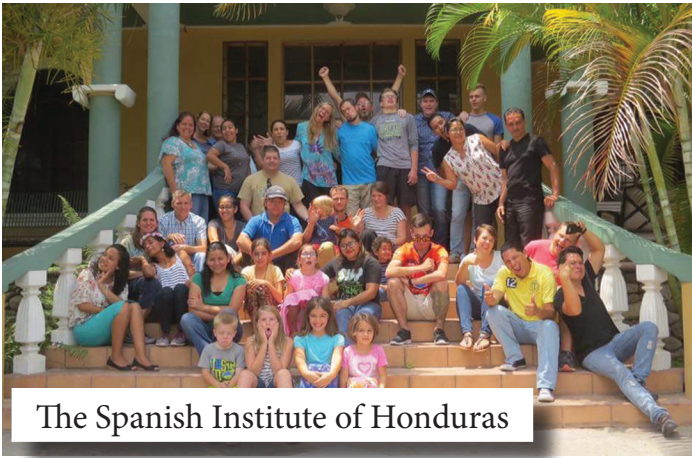
Many of you have asked to meet the bride and little Carlitos. Well, we certainly want to oblige, so we are planning a trip to the States this summer. Additionally, we've been invited by Cornerstone Community Church in Brooklyn, Michigan to share in their Mega Kids camp, June 19-22. That is the date whose urgency puts the most pressure on all of the permissions and decisions. And lastly, we also plan to be present in the celebration of my niece's wedding in the beginning of July.



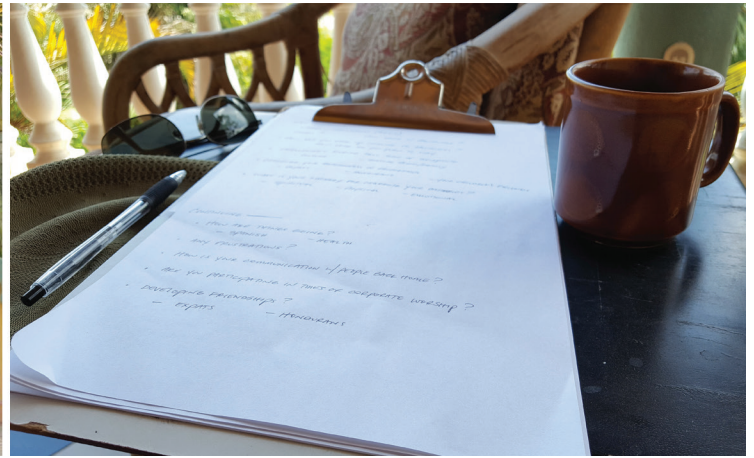
The preparations for our trip are **our main prayer request of the moment**. In order to travel to the United States this summer we have to cross two big hurdles. The first is to acquire the local **court's permission to leave the country** with Jayden and Marissa. Since the adoption is not yet final, even though I am their legal guardian, the kids are still under the court's oversight. While ours is a relatively simple request it is not an urgent case for the court. My lawyer thinks that it might take as long as the end of May for the court to act. This would put us in a pinch as we are hoping to travel mid-June.

Our second hurdle is **acquiring visas**. At this moment I am the only U.S. citizen in my immediate family. Fany, Carlitos, Jayden and Marissa need visas to be able to travel to the United States. That is a process that takes about a week and a half at best. Since I shouldn't buy tickets until all the permissions and visas are approved and in hand, if getting the court's permission takes as long as our lawyer thinks, it could put us in a pinch when it comes time to buy tickets.

We appreciate your prayers concerning these details.



The Spanish Institute of Honduras



On the ministry side of life, I have been busy teaching, counseling and working on some administrative details for our Honduran office. Recently our church has divided the youth ministry into two groups similar to High school and College and Career. Fany and I have been attending the older group and I have taught on a couple occasions. I have been preaching now and again during our church's Sunday morning service and in our adult Sunday School class. It is always a privilege and joy to share with the congregation of which I have been a part for 23 years.

In March I spent several days investing in fellow missionaries. A few blocks from my home here in Siguatepeque there is an institute for teaching Spanish. Many of the students are missionaries who are beginning their ministry, while others have more experience but are carving out time from their lives and ministry to continue their acquisition of Spanish. The directors of the institute have invited me to invest in the pastoral care of the students and teachers. It is an honor to encourage and challenge these dear folks during this moment of their lives. Obviously the details of my conversations are confidential,

but please do take a moment to pray for these missionaries.

- Progress in Spanish acquisition
- Adapting to Honduran culture
- Living in harmony with co-workers
- Developing strategies and habits to recharge physical, emotional and spiritual batteries

This was my second time to meet in counselling sessions with the students. The directors are very happy with the results and have asked me to begin similar sessions with their Honduran teachers. That will happen over the next couple weeks.



Teaching in a local school assembly



Teaching at Bethel Church



Government paperwork

Our Gratitude

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