

## 2017 Costa Rica Update

*"Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before"* (Philippians 3:13). What an encouraging passage of scripture to motivate someone to forget the past and focus on the future in Christ but so much easier said than done. I stood there looking at a 12 year-old girl and her one week-old baby. I wanted to cry for her childhood being robbed and I wanted to yell at those that had taken her into human trafficking. Her hollow eyes still haunt me but I praise the Lord for a ministry that rescued her from those people and have kind workers that take care of her baby and enable her to finish school and even learn a trade. In the midst of growing up too fast, she will hear that Jesus loves her, that He died for her and that He wants to redeem and restore her. All I could do was rock babies, give out MoonPies to the older children and pray for those young mothers that one day they'll call upon the name of Jesus for salvation and forget those horrible things in their past. My prayer is that one day they realize they are loved, accepted and complete in Jesus Christ.



*"Remember not the former things, neither consider the things of old"* (Isaiah 43:18). I'm not sure I've ever seen a more joyful moppper than Andres. As he mopped, he said, "Today I'm 90 days clean and it's all God!" We rejoiced with him. Some of the men at God in Action Rehab Center for Men were working, some lifting weights but the ones only there for less than a month were reading their Bibles because that is all they are allowed to do. We know the Word of God changes people. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new (II Corinthians 5:17). We loved their curriculum but grieved over their living conditions even though the guys didn't seem to mind that they literally live in a barn. The government requires windows and doors in the sleeping quarters in order for the facility to remain open. The men have been praying and it was so exciting to hear that someone is going to make that happen.



*"Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy"* (Psalm 82:3). That is exactly what Victor and Melba have done for years. Currently, they have 51 children living in their home and accept no government assistance. Two government rules that she couldn't live by were they couldn't call them Mom and Dad and they couldn't take the children to church. Neither of these rules were acceptable so they live by faith, relying on donations and volunteers. Can you imagine the laundry that 51 children produce? Gary & Elizabeth Wilkins try to go daily to help with laundry and they love on the children, too. I met one precious girl who limped because her family broke her legs when she was a baby and burned her with cigarettes. She's been at the orphanage for 10 years and is the sweetest, friendliest child there. I asked why at age 65 Melba continues taking children. Because people ask. A dying mother begged her to take her children because she knew they would be taken care of when she was gone. Of course, she couldn't say no so they are now part of the 51.



Our last stop was at First Baptist Church Paso Ancho where we met with the pastor and the two ladies cooking for the children. The feeding program began with serving lunch to school age children but their preschool siblings and mother would have to wait outside while he or she ate. Now it is open to whomever needs a meal in the community. I was amazed to hear that churches in Puerto Rico are providing the money to pay for the meals three days a week. Pastor told us that they contacted him after Hurricane Maria hit and said, "Don't worry. We'll continue paying for the meals". Another church asked why they were only serving three days a week and the answer was money. The church member assured him that his church would provide for the other two school days and they have kept their promise. Children in a very rough neighborhood get at least one good meal a day during the week. I know you are thinking what about the weekend? Maybe the Lord will prompt someone else to take care of those meals. We had a whirlwind vision trip but so exciting to see the many ministries in which the Wilkins are assisting and opportunities for us to help them. Lord willing, we will return in April with a team of ladies to help organize the laundry facility, rock babies and feed the children. Thank you for faithfully partnering and praying for me!



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