

Cosmic Family, Bigger God

by Michelle DiSarno

The first time I went to Mexico with Long Hill Chapel in 2003, I was without my family.

I returned home with stories of sleeping in a dusty tent, sharing a three gallon shower bag with someone after mine broke, and having to cover my nose with a bandana when using the outhouses—but gagging anyway. Consequently, the next two years I went to Mexico, I was without my family.

I kept going back because I had somehow felt at home far from home. It broke my small town suburban bubble to realize that I have brothers and sisters in every race and socio-economic group. One night we were invited to a Spanish church, and during worship, we recognized the tune “Open the Eyes of My Heart.” So all at once the Mexicans and the Gringos lifted our respective lyrics to the ceiling and I thought: “every tribe and tongue.” We can imagine the expanse of His Kingdom, but when we travel its diverse roads, the Supremacy of Christ and the relevance of the Gospel become that much more evident and universal. An insatiable craving to experience these truths more and more brought me to many other places, the latest of which was India. From these experiences I have seen that as Believers, we may embrace family everywhere on this big/little blue/green dusty earth. Through that embrace, Jesus patiently convinces me of His power and His tender, redeeming, far-reaching love.

After awhile my family crowned me with the title of “World Traveler” (“Where did you come from??” my mom often asks.) Well, curiosity got the best of them eventually, and after several years’ worth of Mexico testimonies from others in the congregation, the next DiSarno took the plunge. (Extra incentive was that Long Hill had switched its ministry partnership to a C&MA family who live there permanently, and whose vision for short term teams include beds, running water, and private shower stalls.)

My younger sister Karen finally signed up with her friend in 2009 (it was an “I’ll go if you go” scenario), even still with grumbling and skepticism. She prefaced the trip with the notorious disclaimer of one whose life is about to change against his or her will, by declaring, “Don’t expect my life to change.” God smirked.

Change. You don’t have to wonder if it will happen. The Body of Christ in action: when you find yourself in the midst of people loving people in tangible, practical ways, the invisible God becomes visible. Shouldering a load of doubts, questions, and anger at the time, my sister said that when she witnessed the humble Mexican family tearfully thank God for His provision, she instinctively knew God was real—and was good. Furthermore, she felt a sense of awe that He had let her be apart of it. She came back to NJ with a desire for a relationship with Jesus.



A year later, the two of us stood in front of our parents and the rest of the 2010 Mexico team and shared how these mission trips had impacted our lives. Then Pastor Dan tied it all together with that one ever-present conclusion—"you may think you came here to build a house, but God brought you here to meet with Him." Serving is hardly about the work we do, but the transformation God works in us. Faith grows; priorities reorganize. It's all about our personal journeys with Him. I was so thankful that this time, my mom, dad, sister and I could embark on a family journey to Ensenada, and then return home with the experience between us.

I think my family would now agree that it is important to see Christianity alive in different places and cultures, so that your God can get bigger in your



heart, and your sense of family can become cosmic. In fact, my mom recently told me Mexico has helped to "erase borders." In other words, she newly understands the believers' oneness in Christ. The erasure of borders is exactly the point of crossing them: God flips His pencil around and begins to rub away those lines that sometime come between us and our communities, our world, and our Jesus.

However, crossing international borders is not the only way this expansion can happen. The Word comes to life when we put faith into action, wherever we are. There are plenty of borders to cross right at home. So whether it's Ensenada, Newark, or the lunch table at work, just remember that you have a premium passport from the ultimate Kingdom—the inviting love of Christ from the royal family of God.