

His Awesome Power in Chile!

There has never been another time in my life when I have vividly seen God work in numerous miraculous ways. I have always believed that He existed as I grew up in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but I have never truly witnessed His ultimate power in such a time as this. This year, I decided to direct all my scheduling to attend a Maranatha Volunteers International mission trip in Higuera, Chile (December 2008) with the hope of seeing God's work in my life and in the lives of others, and I tell you – I have not been disappointed.

Last year when I went to Manta, Ecuador, I saw God's hand in the lives of the people around me and observed how He made a way for hearts to be touched through the building of an education centre. Thus, I was dying to see how much more He would do this year through the building of a church in Chile.

We were about 19 in number and I longed to see how much work could come out from such a small group (compared to last year's group comprising of about 70 plus). I was excited about what was about to take place, although I am not a fan of construction work.



The children who came the last day of the VBS

Many of us hoped to finish the building without suffering from aching backs and sun-tanned faces, but the one thing that we were learning was that we definitely had to put away 'self' to get the job

done, even if that included getting dirty. I found myself sifting sand to get the mortar going, striking blocks (I used a striking tool to get a finished look of the bricks), cleaning bricks, and being active in the VBS program. I cannot tell you that I did not feel like quitting since you would want to question why then did I go on that mission trip, but I did get tired many times. *“Was all this discomfort really worth it?”* I asked myself occasionally.



Alexandria and I sifting the sand so that mortar can be made

The work seemed to increase greatly and we were now faced with new tasks such as cutting ‘escaleritas’ or ‘small ladders’ (wire meshing), filling blocks, and climbing on scaffoldings since walls were going higher. In other words, the more we thought that the work would get easier, the less likely that this was so. In addition, we faced the dilemma of whether the jobs were being done thoroughly at the end of the day (quality was more important than quantity) and at times some grew discouraged.

It was 3 days before we were to leave the work site and then travel to Chillan, and the roof was not on yet. My friend stared pointedly at me that day and stated that we were not going to finish the

building. I looked up at him and somehow I just could not help but share with him the hope that suddenly flooded my soul.

“We’re going to finish this church ... trust me!” was my reply to him. I felt like if God was speaking to me through him. I assured him that we could never do anything of our own selves, but that we had to believe that He would finish the church for us. This was truly a time for us to put God to the test!

Two days later, the roof was finally on (a sigh of relief). I looked on in amazement at the structure as if God was literally using His own hands to build the church. What made it even more pleasant was that we could at last get some shade from the burning sun. The implementation of the roof was definitely a miracle...and that was just **one of the many miracles**.

On Friday (our last day at the work site), we finished all that we could have done and many felt dissatisfied. About 4-5 rows of blocks still needed to be laid and we had to stop working that day at 3 pm so that we could meet with other young people of the community. We cleaned up the site and tried to be optimistic hoping that God knew what He was doing in and through us.

We promised to meet with members of two gangs that evening, one called ‘The fighters’ and the other ‘The Pokémon gang’. We went at the appointed location and stood waiting... *“Did the gangs set us up?”* I wondered. *“We left our work early just to meet with them and they are not here Lord,”* I prayed.



Our group photo with the gangs

Our spiritual leader, Pastor Claudette Aleman decided that she would initiate a prayer session for the members of these gangs while we waited for them. She believed that Satan was trying to call off this special event but she knew that **God would not let our time be wasted.**

After waiting for about 30 minutes, some of the members arrived, and then more and more came. No one knew how to feel about what was going to happen or what would happen that evening, but all we knew was that God was on our side. Ps. Aleman asked them to introduce themselves and then she asked us to introduce ourselves and to say where we were from. After we took a group picture with them, we all held hands together and prayed in a huge circle. Ps. Aleman invited them to come to church the next day and we left feeling hopeful that God will certainly nurture the seeds that we had just planted.



The pastor of Higuera's baptized four persons that Sabbath in the newly constructed building.

Sabbath morning, we stepped on the church compound and a woman stood at the side entrance of the incomplete church building welcoming us inside. **I could not believe what I saw!** When I stepped inside, they had already prepared a pool for baptism; the podium was set up, a carpet neatly laid down, and projector and benches already laid out for a service to begin. You should have seen that gleam in my eyes and the speechless look I held on my face. My heart bubbled with joy as I looked at the few members that were already there and at our group when we witnessed the changes. What drew my attention then was that the people were so eager to worship Jesus that they did not mind worshipping in the new, 'incomplete' infrastructure. I thanked God then, and still thank Him now for what He did in the hearts of our fellow believers.



Looking back, I realized that many lessons could be shared from this mission trip. Firstly, God can use **anyone, anywhere, anytime** to do His work. We were not skilled or professional builders, but He used us, young people, to do His work. Secondly, when God's love is burning brightly in one's heart, one will do **whatever** just to please the Lord. Imagine that the people in Higuera already considered the church to be a complete sanctuary where they could worship God! Lastly, one must **never underestimate the power of God**. That Sabbath, 3 persons from the gangs came to church. What made that so significant? One of them was **the leader** of one of the gangs. Hallelujah!

God knows what He is doing. Do not doubt His awesome power! See maranatha.org and come join me someday!

By Raevae Chrysostom