

Dominican Republic 2011

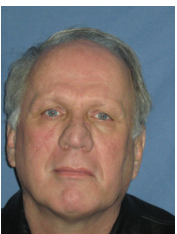


God blessed me with the opportunity of getting to go to the Dominican Republic for a week and I'm so glad he did. I would like to thank all of those who supported us financially and through prayer. Throughout this trip I saw and felt things I never had before. It was a real culture shock to see how people in other countries live. You really just have no idea until you see it firsthand. You hear about people living in the dump, but to actually see it is just heartbreaking. Going on this trip and being in a different country has given me a completely new perspective. I am so grateful that I wake up in the morning and can take a hot shower. I am so thankful that I have clothes and a roof over my head.

Starting out I was a bit unsure of what we were going to be doing and how things were going to run -- but that quickly changed and we got into a routine. I have a passion for kids so getting to hold kids and play with them at Jackie's House and in the villages all day was absolutely amazing. I don't think there was ever a time where I didn't see God at work on this trip. He was constant... in the villages, on the plane rides, helping around SCORE, at Jackie's House, etc.

There were so many things that I absolutely loved about this trip that it's hard to pick and choose. I was very glad that Sarah pushed me to present the gospel and share my personal faith during the water filter presentation. I enjoyed playing with different kids, but especially loved that a difference in language wasn't enough to keep us from clicking. I loved the many different relationships that I built with other members of the team. I love the long-lasting impression this trip will have on my life.

While we were preparing for this trip, missionaries from India came back and talked in church and my Sunday school class. Everywhere I turned it seemed like India was popping up. Missions were already on my heart. In preparation for college, nursing has been on my heart -- I can't help but think how neat it would be to be able to help out with clinics. After this mission trip and being in this atmosphere, I just feel like missions are and should be a part of my life. I'm praying, but still unsure what God has in store for me.
Jackie Balzer



The DR Mission Trip was truly a work of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He molded a team that made all of the work we accomplished enjoyable, efficient and truly a blessing to our team and the people we served. I probably wasn't the only one on the team that started praying that others we knew from NOCC would be able to go on the 2012 DR Mission trip. But I do believe with all of my heart that Jesus' "Parable of the Sower" will be present in any decision that is made to go next year. My prayer for you is that you may be the seed that produces 30, 60, or 100 fold on the 2012 DR Mission Trip. Thank you again for all of your prayers and financial support for the DR team.
David Breeden



Ps. 33:8 "Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the people of the world revere him." The spiritual depth and REVERENCE for the Lord Jesus Christ was demonstrated by an older (blind) gentlemen in the first village we visited. We heard that he loved to sing and so we asked him to sing us a song. His face lit up with joy, he stood to his feet, leaned gently on his long cane, lifted his face to heaven and began to pray---to prepare himself and all of us to sing a sacrifice of praise to the King of Kings! He gave thanks and called upon the Holy Spirit to be among us as we worshipped together!

Oh my-----Do I, as an American, feel deserving of God's gift of eternal life, of a close relationship with Him? Is there too much pride in my worship? in my praise? in my need for Him? Maybe it was his blindness, his joy, his delight, his reverence, his sincere heart to bring us to the feet of Jesus to sing a hymn that filled my eyes with tears as we experienced such joy being in this remote village with this sweet body of believers! Is it house, clothes, material goods, trips, jobs, family or origin that are important? I think not----only a PURE heart for God! (I would have loved to hear his whole life story and how he had come to trust Christ so deeply!)

Ps. 107:41 He sets the needy securely on high, away from affliction, and makes His families like a flock." This is my prayer for Noemi. God did provide a beautiful wheelchair for her that our guys masterfully adjusted to support her little body. May this gift of mobility be used to show God's love and care for her in such a way that her family will see her worth and the unconditional loving care of our father in Heaven for ALL people! May this family and church be Noemi's earthly flock who will love and care for her in all ways! May it be through the needs of Noemi that her family will all accept the free gift of eternal life. I was blessed by the sacrificial giving and working of the team together to purchase the chair, take it with us, spend two hours in the heat (and sweat) to adjust the chair perfectly, and then to pray over the child, her Mom, and Grandmother for God's blessing!

Matt. 6---God talks about how he uniquely cares for us! It was so good to give beautiful dresses to the little girls! AND to have an abundance! God's love is abundant and none of us will go away hungry for more love! A baby at home--wonderful, here is a dress for her too! I thought of the gift of time and talent and love that went into each dress! I heard us saying, "Look at this one---ahhhh sooo sweet!" Or "this little girl will look sooo cute in this color--she needs this one!" Such joy and delight in giving good gifts---Is this how God feels as we accept his perfect gifts and abundant blessings from Him???

III John 4 -- "I have no greater joy than to hear (see) that my children are walking in the truth." To see and experience this mission trip with our daughter, Sarah, was an inspiration! To realize her circumstances; to watch her minister and teach in Spanish amazes me; and I truly marvel at her depth of insight into the word of God! May God continue to lead and guide her, protect her, and give her wisdom beyond her years to parent her children! What an added bonus to love and spend time with the kids!!!

Earlier in the summer, a friend asked me how she could pray for me---- my reply was, "I have sensed that my spiritual life is shallow---I need to move deeper with God!" This mission trip again confirmed that nudging of the Spirit of God ----- I need to learn to BE and to REMAIN in the Vine--because without HIM, I can do nothing!!! John 15: 1-8

What a blessing to go and serve God and represent NOCC! Thank you so much for sending me! It was so worth it all.

Debbie Breeden



Wow. The DR trip was amazing and life-changing! I never expected to be blessed as much as I was! As my mother stated, we went to an "orphanage" for the kids of prostitutes and my mom and I fell in love with a little baby named Emily. That little baby girl inspired me more than anyone else ever could have. She's been through so much in her very short life yet still manages to be the perfect little baby. She has inspired me and helped me remember to never give up no matter how difficult the situation. I also loved being able to go out on the streets with Sarah Liborio and some other ladies to share the gospel with some prostitutes. I was amazed at how accepting they were of us and of course they knew Sarah but still. They said that there's always time to listen to the Word of God. Why can't everyone have that attitude? Even a handful of Christians don't even feel that way.

Before we went on this trip, Jeff would always tell us to make sure we had our testimonies prepared because we would have plenty of opportunities to share with the people in the Dominican Republic. Of course I prepared mine but I never thought I would actually share it. I had the privilege to share it with the people in one of the villages and also with two prostitutes that night we went with Sarah.

Like I said before, this trip has changed my life. It's given me a new hope for the future and it's also inspired me in many ways. In the future, I want to go to college for OB nursing and possibly regular nursing and then take my skills to poor parts of the world. I've been called to help other people and I'll do what I can to help others.

I want to thank those that helped pay our way to the Dominican and also to those who prayed for us beforehand and also while we were there! This trip never would have been as successful as it was without the help of you! Thank you! :)

Emma Henry



If anyone read our blog while we were gone, you know that I fell in love with a beautiful baby girl named Emily while in the DR. She is probably 5-6 months old and has huge chubby cheeks and she sucks in her upper lip when she smiles. She also has some of the symptoms of being a child affected by Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. Her parents live in the dump and get all they can from the trash that other people have thrown away. Worst of

all her parents are very abusive to each other and to their children. An amazing woman named Jackie befriended her parents and encouraged them to let Emily and her toddler sister come live with her in a home she has opened for the children of prostitutes. Emily and the other children at Jackie's House have three meals a day instead always feeling hungry, they have a bed to sleep in instead of sleeping in the streets, and they have friends to play with. Most importantly, they are safe and loved and are learning about God's love, not only through Bible lessons, but also by the example of Jackie and the other people that work there.

This trip has made such a difference in my faith. It has lit a fire in my soul. I have been a spectator Christian for too long here. I have not been involved in the wonderful ministries that this church has. I need to use the gifts that God has given me at North Oak too. I have already joined the prayer chain and am looking forward to getting more involved.

Kelly Henry



It was evident that God was already very present there. There was a distinct difference between the villages that had a church planted there already, in the way that they greeted us. I was so blessed by the Christians there, specifically a 16-year-old boy in a wheelchair who prayed for our group and asked God to bless us. This was a very humbling trip and pushed my comfort zone both physically and socially. It was uncomfortably hot, our shower in our room was freezing cold and there were many opportunities to complain each day.

God showed me, however, that I was getting everything I needed but not necessarily the way I would have wanted it. I realized that this simple lesson can be applied to everything in my life. God will provide you with what you need and then he blesses you with extra. The material things that he gives you aren't important and they can easily tie you down, making you not able to be fully used by him. I realized that investing in relationships and things that are going to advance His kingdom are what I should be driven towards. When I was serving others and focusing outward, I noticed that the problems I had been consumed by began to fade. I realized that they weren't so big after all but I let them get in the way of my relationship with God and sharing with the people around me about Him.

Eriana Holle



I went through a lot of turmoil with even wanting to go after I had signed up. The enemy was working overtime letting me know every reason to not follow through. I had fears and feelings of inadequacy. When we arrived it didn't take long to realize all those feelings were replaced with a sense of sorrow and humbleness for what I was witnessing. I have never seen such a level of poor and what seemed like a hopeless existence. I was challenged by the idea that the society I live in has so many diversions to keep me from relating to God. The things in life that I consider good and a blessing are actually like a curse, at least the priority I give some of them. We met people there that pray for us in

the USA that we can resist the temptation to serve the god of materialism. I met people that seemed content in their situation. Paul teaches that riches do not have the power to give contentment, poverty does not have the power to take it away. I was mostly challenged with a desire for the same contentment that Paul discovered, only found in relation with Jesus. Thank you to all who gave to help make this trip happen.

Ken Holle



This mission trip was a wonderful experience for me. Since this was my first international mission trip I learned a lot by being exposed to a different culture. When we went to the sugar cane villages the people were friendly and welcoming. At the first village one woman showed me her house which was much different than the houses we live in here in the U.S. It was small and the doors were open without screens but it was neat. With the help of Sarah and other missionaries from SCORE to interpret for us members of our group were able to share their testimonies and explain about Jesus cleansing us of our sin like the filters cleansed the dirty water. The Dominicans seemed grateful to receive the water filters. It was also fun to give the young girls the pillowcase dresses. As we were traveling to the villages we saw men working in the fields cutting the sugar cane with machetes! I was amazed at how they could do such hard work in the heat and humidity! We spent a short time at a nursing home where the name translated to mean "home of the ancient." We were told that the people living there had no families and some were found living on the streets. I found this to be a sad place because the conditions were poor and there were only two people there to provide basic care for the residents.

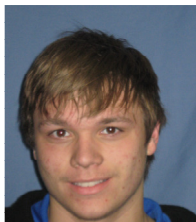
I could see evidence of God working in the villages because the SCORE pastors/missionaries had established relationships with some of the people and there were even small church buildings that had been built. We attended an evening church service at the Los Fundos church where the pastor gave most of the sermon in Spanish. However, he did make an impression on me by asking us all to think about and write down the last time we had truly made a sacrifice for something. Some of us later talked about the idea of really making a sacrifice and how we could do that. It was at this church that a small child with a disability was given a wheelchair that Debbie Breeden had brought with us. After the wheelchair was fitted to the child the little girl's mother and grandmother gave each of us a hug and thanked us. They said that it will improve the quality of her life so much to have this wheelchair.

Another thing that really touched me was the ministries to the children. I really admire the ministry that Sarah has to the Lily Club Girls and the Lily House. We spent an afternoon with some young girls who are at risk for becoming prostitutes. When asked what made them such a high risk, Sarah said that all of the girls in the DR are at risk because of the acceptance of prostitution by the culture. She said the girls were ages 11 – 14. This made an impression on me since my oldest granddaughters are 11 and I just can't imagine them being thrown into a world of prostitution. I also met a girl who was 11 at the orphanage we went to and I felt like I connected with her by spending time with her painting her nails, etc. There were so many experiences that it is difficult to narrow it

down to a short paragraph but these are some of the highlights that stood out to me. I also developed an appreciation and better understanding of what a missionary's life is like and admire Sarah for her devotion to sharing about Jesus.

I would like to thank the NOCC church family for supporting this mission trip in so many ways. I will always treasure this opportunity.

Carolyn Insley



All I can say is "wow!" First of all, "wow" because the whole church helped us either financially or in prayer to get this trip started, and also "wow" because this trip blew my mind away. There is an incredible difference between my faith before and after this trip. To go into a village or an orphanage and to be humbled like we were tells me that there is a very mighty God. I thought about my relationship with God before this trip and it reminded me of an average "TV teenager." God has been part of my life since as long as I can remember but I tried to act like I didn't need Him and that I was perfectly fine on my own. The only time I would talk to Him was when I needed something. I knew I needed a better relationship with Him and thought, I really need to be "God's teenager" instead.

God is the perfect parent. He loves to bless us whether we thank Him or not. He doesn't force himself into our lives either. He wants to know us and wants us to know Him, but waits until we ask Him. This trip has opened my eyes that I need to start a real relationship with Him. I think doing this mission trip was a really good experience to open my eyes and see the world in a new perspective. I love the feeling of helping someone out and especially serving God and doing work that pleases Him. I know that I want to do short-term missions every chance I get from now on and possibly even long term someday. It just isn't possible to explain the feelings of how God blesses you when you bless others.

Jordan Flaherty



While we were there we went to the Highlands which is a place where teams train players to be on their team. There are two swimming pools, soccer field, and baseball fields. Sarah brought the Lily Club girls, which are girls in danger of becoming prostitutes, to come play soccer with us. She asked me if I would do a soccer clinic to teach them how to play soccer. We did some fun drills, and scrimmaged after that. It was awesome to see how much fun they were having. It was great that God used my talent to help those girls.

Maddie Keller



One of the best things about this trip is that we were able to go as a family. When Travis and I went last year, we knew it was an experience we wanted to share with our kids. Thank you so much for making that possible. Seeing God at work in the lives of our children was something that no photo slideshow, PowerPoint, or written words can even begin to express. Maddie conducting a soccer clinic at Highlands for the Lily Club girls, and Jordan teaching a Bible lesson at the orphanage on "Putting God First in Your Life" was exciting because they had to step out of their comfort zones, trust God, and God made it work. The change in them since being back home has been even more rewarding. Hearing Jordan's excitement about GAP (*a 9-month program between high school and college where kids study the Bible, learn Spanish, and work alongside missionaries*) is an amazing turnaround from his usual ideas on how to get rich quick. After three years of working every Sunday morning, Jordan asked his boss not to schedule him anymore so he can attend church and Sunday school. Maddie wants to get a degree in the medical field so she can provide free medical care to sick and hurting people. All four of us agree that we were blessed much more by the people we went to help, than from anything we gave to them. It also helped us realize how truly blessed we are and that God can use anyone, anytime.

One of our t-shirts says, "*For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.*"--2Corinthians 5:14 It was easy to feel a deep spiritual connection being in a group of 23 people, all focused on the single task of serving the Lord, away from the distractions of home and work and technology, surrounded by pastors and missionaries. My goal now that I'm home is to not lose the passion I had in the DR for loving and serving others, compelled by my desire to live for Him and not myself, and to carry on with whatever missions He has for me here. Thank you so much for supporting us on this trip. Whether it was with prayers, encouragement, help with preparations, or finances, your investment was well worth it and extends far beyond just a ten-day trip.

Shelly Keller



First of all, thank you Church family for sending us on our trip. It was great to see the whole church come together to do God's work. This trip was special to me because my whole family got to go, I did miss the dogs a little, though. God was really tugging at the hearts of my kids and I could see them growing spiritually throughout the trip. The people of the Dominican Republic have a way of blessing us more than we could ever bless them with material things. The first village we went to I explained to them that we all thirst for many different things but even though we can be temporarily quenched of that thirst we always get thirsty again. I explained that Jesus offers the living water that when you receive him you will never thirst again. That living water is Jesus. I received many amens to that. God was working in that village long before I got there. An elderly blind man was sitting in the pavilion and stood up and prayed for our group and then sang us a song including giving us the hymn number, which I thought was great. I feel this set the tone for the rest of the trip.

Travis Keller



I am always amazed at how God reinforces his messages. I started reading a book about rest before we left for the DR that I've had for 6 months. While we were there, we were challenged to be still and pray for 2 hours to spend time with God and experience His rest. I have to admit that I was doubtful that I would be able to pray that long, and that I would stay awake! But we did stay awake, and we did pray and when the time was over I felt at peace.

Matt 11:28-29 says "Come to me, all you weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." Rest was not the lesson I expected to bring home from the mission field, but it was the lesson I needed. I didn't come home feeling called to full-time missions, but to my children. God has placed it on my heart to raise up the next generation of believers not only to know Him, but to know His rest. Our lives in the DR were simplified, we had fewer daily responsibilities but it was a good time to re-evaluate what we truly missed and what was really necessary for life.

Anita Koster



The three most meaningful encounters that I experienced were: 1. Being able to spend a day working side by side with SCORE staff to accomplish chores around the complex, getting to know both them and another team of missionaries, all the while having the opportunity to spend a significant part of my day just talking to God about his goals for me, both during the trip and beyond. 2. The visit to the nursing home: I enjoyed spending time with the kids who immediately flocked around us. I could tell that they don't often get visitors, and it was nice to be able to bring some happiness to them just through playing simple games with them. 3. Handing out food packets at one of the villages. During this outing especially, I had the opportunity to communicate with numerous villagers using the bits of Spanish that I understood. It was a good feeling to know that God was using our team as His tool to provide for the needs of the village.

One of the most significant memories I have of the trip is of meeting all of the different individuals who have obviously been touched by God: Pastors Abi & Nathan, Israel, the old man who sang to us in the sugarcane village, Sarah, etc. I found them to be inspiring and very strong personalities in the service of God. Another positive experience from the trip was getting the opportunity to better get to know 21 members of our church community, developing a camaraderie with most of them, and being able to work together as a team to make this a positive and productive experience in the service of the Lord.

I enjoyed the chance to be part of something bigger than myself, and hope to be able to contribute some of my time and resources to future mission trips. I would strongly encourage other church members to experience a mission trip if they have opportunity to.

Dan Koster



Our trip to the DR was a wonderful experience! Thank you all for supporting us with your gifts of money and prayers. God taught me many things. One was how much I love my church family! It was really neat to get to know each one on the team. We got along really well, and we now share this very special mission experience. Even though I went on the trip to help and give to the people of the Dominican Republic, I learned so much from them. They were warm, inviting, full of hugs and smiles. It really made an impression on me to reach out in the same way to visitors in our church. There's no need to be hesitant or shy in approaching others and we usually speak the same language! God also taught me that I have SO much and that he wants me to have a spirit of generosity. It was neat to see how much the missionaries gave of themselves (time, energy, and resources) so that people would come to know Christ as their personal Savior. SCORE is truly a Christ-centered ministry with a goal of bringing people to Christ and then helping to disciple them. I have known God also calls me to do this work as well, but being on the mission trip has reminded me and impressed on me that I am to let Christ's light shine through me.

Paula Martin



We went to Jackie's House. It is a place where children of prostitutes live instead of on the streets. I held this little girl all afternoon. My mom tried to pick her up, but she wanted to stay with me. She liked getting her nails painted. It was neat to give her love and attention. She cried when I left. On Monday, we had a change of plans. There was a strike and the people of SCORE didn't think it was safe for us to go out, so we helped the people that worked for SCORE. We helped the maintenance guy fix things, the housekeepers, the laundry workers, and the missionaries. I helped clean Sarah's apartment. I swept the living room floor and mopped it. I also swept the porch, the steps, and the area where the trikes and strollers were kept. Debbie asked me to find her a stepladder and a putty knife. I went hunting for those things and found them. I really enjoyed helping Sarah. Thank you for praying for us. It was a special trip.

Zoe Martin



I enjoyed our trip to the Dominican Republic. I really liked the first village that we went to, because we got to interact with the people more there. I played frisbee with another boy a lot of the time there and I was surprised when we got back on the bus and he was with us. It turned out that when I thought that I was playing with a village boy, it was actually the bus driver's son, Daniel. I also really enjoyed Jackie's House, a home for kids who can't live with their parents. They had a nice playground and there were lots of kids. We made button yo-yos for the boys and painted the girls nails (though I didn't do that part). The kids there also sang for us. The day that we worked at SCORE, I got to help cut the weeds with a machete. It was sweaty and awesome! One day we had a man jump on the back of the bus and ride for a while. That was crazy. It was really fun to get to see Mattias. This was the first time that I have been to the beach and it was really cool. Thank you for helping to send us on this trip.

Kaleb Neher



First, I would like to thank our church family for making this trip a reality. I have been praying for a long time that we would do a church family mission trip. Along with this I have prayed that we would have families go and serve together on the mission field. It was a blessing to have such a diverse group go and serve together and to have family units serving together!!!

I was specifically challenged by the faith and prayer of two men. An older, blind gentleman in the first village prayed a most powerful prayer for us. To hear him pray and sing was so powerful and challenging. That afternoon to have a young man of 16 pray for our group was very humbling. I realized that my prayers are weak and sound as if I don't really believe that God is listening. My prayer life has changed as I have reflected on how these two godly men prayed for us.

Some went to serve, some sent by financial means, some used their talents such as sewing, some prayed, some sent words of encouragement, some kept track of the finances, some packed, some sent gifts to the missionaries, some made trip arrangements. For the first time I felt that the gifts of the entire church family was used on a mission trip. I pray that this will continue as we send workers out into the harvest fields.

Jeff Neher



In one of the villages after we handed out dresses, Ruth shared the gospel with a group of young girls and a couple of women. One of the women prayed to receive Jesus as her savior. That was awesome, but what was really encouraging was to see her friend standing behind her. She was praying under her breath right along with Ruth and after her friend prayed and visited with Ruth, she was so excited. It made me feel like we could leave and there would be someone there to encourage her in her new faith.

It was also a testimony to what SCORE and the missionaries have been doing there. Another highlight was just getting the opportunity to love on some dear friends who are making sacrifices to serve God where he has called them. It was great to see Sarah and the kids. We hope that we were encouraging to her. I know that she had to be exhausted when we all left. Getting to see Ruth Castillo was such a blessing as well. Even when I can't understand her, I love to see her connect with people and present the gospel. Both of these women have such a bold faith. It is inspiring to spend time with them.

We got the opportunity to hear two church services on Sunday and then on Tuesday and Thursday they had SCORE nights and another pastor presented a message. It was amazing how God orchestrated them to work together. So these are the things that I am wrestling with: 1) Is my faith really faith if it doesn't compel me to action? Faith should have feet. 2) When was the last time that I *really* sacrificed something for someone else? 3) My testimony will be most effective for Christ when I can share passionately about what he has been doing in my life lately. Then Pastor Ken continued that subject during his sermon this past Sunday.

Jessica Neher



Going to the Dominican Republic was the greatest experience I have ever had. And I learned that in America - not to be rude - but we are spoiled, we all want the newest iPod or iPad or cars. But in the Dominican, women who needed a ride into town would have to sleep with their neighbor so they could get to town. It is the same with food as well. It is hard to be a woman there. When we went to Jackie's House there were a lot of beautiful girls, and we are scared for them because they could end up on the street, or worse, kidnapped or raped. But it was beautiful when they would sing us songs. Most of the time we couldn't understand them but the way they sang was amazing. If I ever get the chance to go again I am taking that chance.

Abbey Rupke



What's faith? When do you know if you have faith? These challenging questions were posed to us in church while we were in the Dominican Republic last week. Do we get it when we say a prayer? Do we get when we believe in doctrine? In my own words "Faith is like God's form of gravity that causes us to act, while he draws us closer to him." I can testify to seeing faith many times last week in various forms: the blind heard and believed, boys were rescued from a certain death in the ocean, compassionate caregivers to the needy children, people receiving Christ for the first time, praying for protection as the country riots, and a church that gave of its time and resources to send us. Ultimately I believe that faith leads us into action.

P.S. May GOD bless you, and may our Lord and Savior continue to use faith to draw you nearer to Him all the days of your life.

Dustin Rupke



I went on this trip with the intention of serving and blessing others, yet excited to see how God would work in and through each one of us. However, it turns out that I was blessed and grew more than I ever expected.

The culture in the DR was so different from ours. It was overwhelming and difficult to take in, especially initially. The level of poverty and unmet needs were glaring. As the week progressed, it became increasingly obvious to me that you can be "poor" in different ways. Some of those we had interactions with were very poor in terms of material things, yet they were so "rich" spiritually.

Two situations in particular demonstrated this. In the first sugar cane village we visited, an old, poor blind man blessed us with a powerful prayer, asking God to bless our group and our work, and to be with him as he sang for us. We were all richly blessed by his prayer and his singing. At Jackie's House, a home for children of prostitutes, we met a 16-year-old young man who has a bone disease that left him confined to a wheel chair. However, he knew his Bible, gave us his testimony and prayed passionately. He wants to be a pastor....in fact in many ways he already is. This was another place we were more blessed by those we came to serve than we were a blessing to them. What stood out to me wasn't their handicaps or how "poor" they were, but that they possessed a sense of peace and contentment and obviously loved Jesus. They possess little of what counts in

our society, yet have what matters most! Here in America, even if we may not see ourselves as wealthy, we are in comparison. Unfortunately, when we are "wealthy" in terms of income and/or material things, it often gets in the way of our being or becoming wealthy in a spiritual sense. I know this has been true for me.

Another big thing God taught me during this week was about the heart and life of missionaries. I was in awe of their boldness, passion, and willingness to give all for God. I saw them work joyfully for hours a day, driven to love others and share the gospel. While they live very meagerly, they often shared what little they have with others. I was very convicted to intentionally find ways to regularly support missions and missionaries by finding ways to encourage them and to support them more, financially and/or through prayer. It pointed out to me how upside down many of my priorities really are. I have often given God leftovers. I want to intentionally seek and spend time with God and grow in my love for him. I know this will result in my being a bolder and more giving person, out of love, not duty. I want to learn to more completely listen and obey God, which will be a challenge while living in a society where it's easy and expected to do what is most comfortable.

If you are a bargain shopper and like to get the best deal for your money, investing in missionaries and their work is like finding the perfect outfit on the sale rack at 90% off. They prayerfully consider how they are to spend all of their resources and energy. It was a blessing to watch Sarah Liberio, a SCORE missionary originally from our church, at work. She was a role model for all of us. We are all called to share the gospel, wherever we are, and she always did so with boldness and passion, and with no concern with possible rejection. I want to develop this same passion and boldness.

Karen Wasinger



Thanks to the NOCC family for helping to send us on this trip through your prayers and finances. There were so many ways we saw God working in the lives of the Dominicans we met and the Americans on our team. Many times while trying to encourage people at a village or orphanage, we were sure they encouraged us more than we did them. I hope that our team was able to bless Sarah while we were there but being with Sarah on the mission field was truly inspiring for us. For me personally the depth of her relationship with Jesus and her boldness to share God's love with others is amazing. I know that day-to-day activities for her are difficult as she raises two kids on her own. But she will be the first to tell you "it's not about me it is about God." As we come back to the hustle and bustle of our crazy spoiled and busy American lives, I pray that I will grow closer to God and realize that it is "not about me but about what God is doing and can do through me." Thank you for helping us share God's love through the gift of water filters and dresses.

Lanee Young