

Pressing On . . .

(July-September, 2010)

Our dear partners,

Greetings in our wonderful Savior, Jesus! We hope this letter finds you well. The last quarter had many 'rest stops' for us as we battled with a series of viral infections that came with the changing season - too much humidity, heat, and sporadic rains. We have managed to keep afloat while keeping up with ministry responsibilities. In spite of our recent ailments though, our annual medical exam showed no major health problem. Everything is still normal, and the doctor merely admonished us to watch our diet more strictly and exercise regularly. We count it a great blessing that at our age (Cory turned 53 last Sept 18, and Danny will be 56 on Oct 29), we are still free from hypertension which runs in our families. We really need to be good stewards of these frail bodies. Without them we cannot serve the Lord.

A Special Training Program

Most of our attention is now given to the ministries of our home church. We are really in a very unique situation and we feel like God is bringing us through a training program to learn how a church can have a direct influence in community transformation. It has been lamented that Biblical Christianity has not seemed to transform Philippine society in spite of the many churches planted. Corruption and poverty are still very high in our country. One possible reason could be that most churches - especially in the city - are 'isolated' from the communities around them. Our home church for many years was like that - the members were mostly from other areas of the city, and our 'neighbors' were even suspicious of us. But as what we have shared with you, our church now has more than 20 bible study centers within a square kilometer area around our building.



(Members of a BS center posing with their Cebuano Bibles.)

Because of this, we are trusting God for the church to become a 'center for transformation' which can train/build godly and responsible members/leaders not only for the church but also for the community. This will give our discipleship program direct application in our

social context. Do pray with us as we lay the foundation for this pioneering ministry for the church. The Spirit of God continues to encourage us with tokens of His movement here and there.

'A Decade of Persistence'

Cory shared our extraordinary experience in our home church to an Evangelical Free Church missionary couple who used to attend CEFC when they were based in the Philippines. They were so encouraged by the story, and believed that it can encourage many other EFC leaders and pastors in America. So they connected Cory to the editor of EFC Today, a magazine like Evangelicals Today for EFC America. They are now working on a story entitled, A Decade of Persistence, featuring how important it is to stay the course and wait on God to revive His people and reveal His mighty power through the church. Who would expect a small, needy church in Cebu City to encourage churches in America? But through faith, God makes the 'weak things' be vessels of His glory that His power, not ours, be magnified.



(These are the 'foot soldiers' in our church. They go out to the BS centers every week. Once a month, we have fun, food, and fellowship at the PCEC house.)

Ministering to Fellow Workers

We feel God's affirmation of our calling to minister to God's servants in Cebu every time one of them would come to us for some help or encouragement. This last quarter, we helped two couples resolve some marital problems. Both were no longer talking to each other for more than a month. Praise God for the breakthrough - they are talking again! Always a good place to start.

One of our graduates who works in one of the churches called one day to ask if she can spend her day off at our center. She said we didn't have to entertain her. She just wanted to enjoy the peace and refreshment she finds in our place. The other day, a missionary couple also asked if they can invite themselves to dinner at our house. They just wanted to relax with us after a hard week's work. They ended up bringing another missionary couple who are new in Cebu. More than anything, we find that our friendship is what really ministers most to our fellow workers.

'The Christian Leader and Her Family'

This was the theme I (Cory) spoke on to a group of women leaders in Mindanao last August. Recognizing the pressure to have a 'picture perfect' family among Christian leaders, I addressed the issue of how we, as Christian leaders, do not have perfect families, but that in our imperfections, we can be committed to integrity and humility. Rather than covering up or running away from exposure to our 'flaws', we can deal with them in God's way and be an example of how God's grace restores the humble. The conference was held in Davao City right after their 'fruit festival' when the city was literally flooded with fruits. It was an 'eat-all-you-can' feast with sweet lanzones, mangosteen, rambutan, and durian. The women gave me so many fruits to bring home, I had to leave some behind; otherwise, it would cost me a fortune to pay for extra weight on the plane. 😊

Our Prayer Requests:

1. Full recovery from a series of viral/ respiratory infections - stronger immune system.
2. Spiritual leadership in our home church - wisdom and strength - as we develop and teach discipleship materials, encourage and mentor the other leaders/workers, preach sermons, and oversee the over-all direction of the church.

3. Training programs to go with the 'community transformation ministry' that we want to establish in our church. Pray for God's guidance and financial provision for this project.
4. A fruitful ministry and an enjoyable/restful time with our loved ones in the U.S. as we visit them in November.

A Crown of Joy



In the photo with us is Bishop Frank Santos. I (Danny) led him to Christ and followed him up as a young believer when we were both students in the campus. He is now a bishop in his denomination - overseeing many churches. He also travels around the country mentoring pastors in using the G12 church growth strategy. He invited me to his meeting with some pastors here in Cebu and told the audience how I used to 'chase' him around the campus, because he didn't want to have bible study with me. He claimed that because of my persistence, he became a disciple. He has come a long way in following Jesus. I have done only a small part in his life, but to hear him say, that if it were not for my persistence, he wouldn't be where he is now, I caught a glimpse of what it will be like in heaven when people we have evangelized will testify, "If it were not for you, I wouldn't be here." In Paul's words, they will be our crown of joy! (1 Thess. 2:19)

In heaven, you will also hear us say, "If it were not for your faithful support, we would not have been able to win and disciple many for Christ." We sincerely appreciate you!

To God be the glory forever!

Danny and Cory Varela