

## **Berner Missionary Venture Update – 7/18/11**

Dear Friends, who share in the hope of our Lord Jesus Christ!

How great is our Father's love for us! (Selah!) So worthy of all praise! With exceeding joy, I testify today of God's greatness, His faithfulness, His love!

It is a privilege to share with you as a New Hope Seminar Graduate, God's faithfulness in our lives to accomplish His purposes and plans. The very stark awareness of God's faithfulness to lead us, the lengths He goes to make known to us His love and His ways has truly transformed my husband (Paul) and I. How intimate is our God!

What a thrill it is when our eyes are opened to what He has done and is doing! I share with you the journey the Lord has Paul and I on, praying it will encourage you in your walk! Each of our journeys is unique. As a child of God, you, too, are on an incredible journey and God is mightily at work in and through you! My prayer for all of us is that we don't miss the joy of seeing God in the very smallest details of each day. That our lives are daily lived in continual praise and worship of Him Who gave His all for us!

On October 10, 2010, God called Paul and I forth to set out to Tyler, Texas, leaving behind the comforts of being surrounded by family and friends in Iowa to a new land, to new promises, to a new life in Christ. I struggle to put into a few words what God has done and is doing!

One of the first focuses when we arrived in Tyler was to establish our twenty-six year old daughter Emily in a nourishing environment, to which she would grow in the purposes and plans the Lord has for her life. God very directly led us to Breckenridge Village of Tyler (BVT), a faith-based community for adults with disabilities. Emily was immediately enrolled in their day program, with plans to apply for full time residency. BVT graciously allowed us to park our camper at their guest campsite, while we waited on God to show us where to go next.

Two days later, we set out to find employment. Incredibly, God led us directly to Atria Willow Park, an Assisted Living Community, in which there were immediate job openings for both Paul and I. Literally, at the beginning of our pursuit for employment in a city of 96,500 people and multiple businesses, God broke through the chaos and maze to lead us directly to where we were to go. God also drove deep stakes in the ground that served to remind me often that He indeed led us here, both to BVT and Atria Willow Park. I have found in life, that at crucial places, God does this for His children. I am most grateful!

One of the next lessons for us to learn was that God's plans are sovereign and often are quite different than ours. We were content to stay at the BVT campsite and to volunteer there, but within a few weeks, the administrator kindly told us that we needed to find a new campsite, as families could only park there temporarily. We set out to find a new site. Around the corner, nestled among the trees was an RV park called Country Get Away. Most of the campers were very run down, so I quickly asked God if this was safe and if it was His will for us to live there. Within moments of talking with the manager, we knew that this indeed was where God was leading us. We soon discovered that the owner of the campsite was a precious woman of God who believed that Country Get Away was set apart by God to be a land of healing. I was thrilled to discover that there was a small lake on this property with a walking path and luscious trees everywhere. God truly gives us the desires of our hearts and being here was one of mine!

As I walked the grounds, God's Spirit bore witness with mine that this land was indeed set apart for healing and that He would draw those who were to be here to come. God also through His Word confirmed that those who were to leave, He would drive out. We have witnessed this with our very own eyes! On this property are three Bed and Breakfast establishments, with one being a five-bedroom log home overlooking the lake. I am drawn especially to this place. There is such a deep sense that God is preparing this home for a specific place of ministry for His Glory—a place of retreat and healing. I am confident that God is working out every detail and that someday, we will see His plans more clearly.

In the meantime, God brought together a group of 7-15 individuals every Friday evening to study His Word through the New Hope for Spiritual Growth Bible Study. The group varies each week, but God faithfully meets us just where we are. Last night, as we studied the powerful Name of Jesus as our Jehovah Raah—our Shepherd and Jehovah Jireh—our Provider, many began to openly and with candid honesty share their lives.

One man shared that his mother had just passed away, and that he had thought he had more time to make right the broken relationship between them. This man had openly shared the week before that he had been beaten as a child, had his jaw broken by his father, had tried to stay away from drugs but was swallowed up by them in his 30's. He spent time in jail and lost everything...his wife, his family, and so much more. God had brought him to Country Get Away to live, and when he lost his job, Lafon, our land lady, immediately offered him employment. He is broken and hurting, yet testifies that he is returning to God and is blessed.

Another man who moved last week to our RV park spoke up and shared the raw emotions of being in a divorce courtroom, just the week before, receiving a divorce he did not want. How can it be, he cried out, that his ex-wife, a professing Christian, could stand that day in the courtroom and rip him apart, with her lawyer and with such hatred. He went on to share that he too had been beaten by his father and was on drugs at the age of 14. He testified that God had delivered him from the bitterness of his childhood beatings and how his relationship with his dad is being restored. The divorce wounds are so fresh. We pray that our new friend will once again run into the Strong Tower of Christ and find all that he needs during these difficult days.

Another woman shared that her father was murdered when she was younger, and her mother talked the talk of religion but didn't walk the walk. God has done a miraculous work in her life and she reminded all of us of the importance of a prayer closet to get away with God.

Another man shared that just last year his father died, his brother drowned, and his sister was ran down by her boyfriend in a vehicle and killed. He shared honestly that he has lost his trust in God and that he is just now coming back, seeking God.

Another woman received word recently that her husband was not granted parole this year and continues to serve time in prison due to drugs. Her three sons are all alcoholics. She struggles to make ends meet with her waitress job.

Another lady, the mother of a baby and 9 year old, also just moved to Country Get Away. She is separated from her husband. Each week, she brings another family member or friend with her. Our group continues to grow! What a mission field! God's presence is most real! Hearts are open and hungry, seeking and hurting. God is the only answer! We cry out to God for an outpouring of His Spirit.

Paul and I also have been called to trust God at new heights. Emily, six weeks ago, was discharged from BVT for misconduct. The unacceptable behavior was not a surprise, as Paul and I had some challenging times as well with Emily during the past few months. However, I had been so confident that BVT was exactly God's will for her, that He would show them how to help Emily and that He was going to make a way for her to someday live there. I so desperately wanted Emily to live in that environment where God's peace dwelt and Godly men and women served. The realization that this wasn't so for our daughter stung! My heart cried out to God, "I don't understand!" God tenderly showed me throughout the next few weeks that He, not I, was establishing Emily and that His thoughts and ways were much higher than mine! A gentle reminder that in all things I am to trust Him whispered and washed through my soul. God confirmed through a journal entry dated exactly one year to the day that Emily was discharged from BVT that it was indeed His plan for her to live at the Pettite House with Community Access instead. I was amazed at this confirmation and a peace that passed all understanding settled in me. God is so faithful to His children!!! I strongly encourage you that if you feel impressed to write something down, do it and date it!

The home that Emily resides in now is an ICF home and follows strict state guidelines. Emily is learning to live a disciplined life, through tough love. Those in charge, even though this organization is not faith-based, are devoted Christians, who rely on God's leading, wisdom and help. Emily is struggling with dying to self (choosing to do things her way, not respecting those in authority over her). Consequently, she is going through a rough adjustment time. We hold fast to God's Word and His promises for her, knowing that He is working all things out for her good, that He has given her a sound mind and that in Christ, she is healed!

I eagerly await with great expectation the healing miracles here as well as at Country Get Away. I believe it will happen, because Jesus said so! Please pray for us! Our New Hope Bible Study will be starting Phase II within a month or so. We will begin going through the Main Root Problems and deliverance from them! Please pray that those held in bondage will be set free, that the brokenhearted will be healed, that God's Spirit will have complete reign over each group time. Praise God for His Empowering Presence in each life! Please also pray for my husband as God is leading him to be involved with a prison ministry, a calling that has been on his life for years, but not until now was it more clearly revealed.

There is such an acute awareness that Christ is coming soon! I hear a song played almost daily "O Glorious Day!" I am reminded that time is short and that we must seize every opportunity the Lord gives us! The importance of being ready at all times! Jesus' words in the garden to His closest disciples, He also speaks clearly to us: "Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41). My constant prayer is for God's will to be done here on earth as it is in Heaven and that He be glorified in all things!

God does have great plans and purposes for each of our lives! We can't find these in our own strength—it is most futile. We are desperately dependent upon God! Run to Him and patiently wait on Him! Dwell in who you are in Christ. Stand firm in your faith to the end! Our God reigns!

In Christ, my Hope, my Everlasting Joy!

Cathy Berner