

## **Nicaraguan Mission Team's "Bridge of Hope" Project Summary (Updated 5/26/2010)**

**On Sunday March 21, 2010** I went forward to ask Pastor Ben Newman to pray for the bridge project. See, since last year, the project has been in virtual stalemate. Basically we were no closer to building the Nicaraguan bridge than this time last year. The reason - I was trying to do it all myself, without God's help.

**That all changed** that Sunday, when I went forward and turned it all over to God. I admitted that I could not do it on my own. I needed His help. I asked Pastor Ben to pray for a response from Bridges to Prosperity, who I had emailed a four page letter the previous night explaining the need for our bridge project, requesting assistance, any assistance, for the project.

**Two weeks prior, one individual** who heard about the bridge project over a year ago remembered it when he saw an article on suspended bridges, and thought enough to clip it, scan it, and email it to me. Over a year of seemingly unanswered prayers, waiting on an answer, and finally, the Lord had opened a door. This one email changed my life.

**In the March 7 edition of Parade** was entitled a story "Building Bridges of Hope – moved by a plight a world away, one man takes action". Ken Frantz, the founder of Bridges to Prosperity, has seen the same need our Mission Team has, the need for walking bridges, and shares the same passion as my church. He has constructed more than 40 walking bridges since 2001. According to the article, over the next few years, they plan to focus their efforts in Zambia, Ghana, Liberia, Guatemala, and ....Nicaragua! His non-profit organization helps train churches in the construction of walking bridges, just like the one we are planning to build.

**The NEXT DAY**, God answered my prayer, an email from Milosz with Bridges to Prosperity – they were in Nicaragua looking for bridge sights, and all the ones he had visited so far were "less than stellar" and ours "sounds like a contender". God still answers prayer, and God still opens doors and believe me God has opened a lot of doors.

**Scripture Emphasis: NCV James Chapter 2, Verse 14-17**

“My brothers and sisters, if people say they have faith, but do nothing, their faith is worth nothing. Can faith like that save them?”

**The Nicaraguan Bridge project** is a “faith based” project. Personally, this could easily be one of the most challenging projects I have ever been involved with. Project details include – further analysis of soil conditions, taking pictures of the site, foundation design work, excavating and pouring of concrete foundations, stringing and securing the steel cables between bridge supports, placing and securing slats between these cables. Finally, placing a plaque on the bridge which will read, “This Bridge is dedicated in the name of Jesus Christ”. As you can tell, there is a lot of work to do.

**Scripture: NCV 1 Peter 2:9**

“But you are a chosen people, royal priests, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession. You were chosen to tell about the wonderful acts of God, who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”

A friend emailed me this scripture last month, to encourage me as I searched for the Lord’s will in my life, and to put away any doubts I had about my involvement in the bridge project. My response to her was simple - chosen is a very strong word to me; but I know the Lord has called me to work on this project, and I am willing to apply my knowledge and skills He has given me towards this project. But chosen? Even then the Lord gave me a message to share with other people on being willing to step out on faith, and it is based on Matthew Chapter 14, which tells of Jesus calling out to Peter to have faith and get out of the boat and come to him on the water.

Building the bridge in Nicaragua – I felt like I had one foot out of the boat, but not sure what it would take to move the other. So the week before I left to go to Nicaragua, I prayed to God that he would give me a clear sign, whether or not I am **chosen** for this project, a sign that would signal for me to take my other foot out of the boat and onto the water, and to commit my whole self to this project.

With that said, Mike McCormick and I went to Nicaragua the last week in April to survey the bridge site and do the final soil analysis. We landed in Managua on Friday, April 23 and met Avery Bang, the Bridges to Prosperity representative who will help with the design of the bridge. Because if I am going to put HIS name on it, it’s going to be done right!

From there, we traveled with Mike's friend, Danilo, about 3 hours to Matiguas. The next day, Mike and Danilo had arranged a meeting with the villagers, the townspeople, the mayor and his council of leaders, and the town's engineers. The purpose of this meeting was to make sure our Mission Team had the support of all parties involved. This meeting was very successful, and you could see the excitement in everyone's eyes as we all left to go to the proposed bridge site. We accomplished all of the preliminary field work that day – bridge centerline, measurements, foundation locations, etc. and completed the initial bridge design calculations that night.

We spent the following Monday in Managua getting the major material costs together – concrete block, cement, rebar, fencing and nails. From this, a detailed cost estimate of the bridge was calculated. The budgeted cost for the suspended walking bridge is \$25,000. However this is NOT a fundraising campaign, I do not want any money, but only that you take the message you will receive home in your heart, and pray about it. If you so choose to give, I will leave information with the Pastor. But more than anything, I and my church's Nicaraguan Mission Team need your prayers for this project, that the Lord will continue to have his hand in it, and people's faith will be strengthened as a result of this project.

**Estimated time-line:** Construction is tentatively scheduled to begin in January, to be completed in 9 to 12 weeks.

**What's going to happen between now and then?** The Nicaraguan Mission Team, my church congregation, and you, must pray; pray that God will provide the resources for this bridge. A bridge for the school teacher who must wade across the river to teach the village children, a bridge for the farmer who must carry his fresh milk across to sell in the nearby town, for the mother who must cross to get needed supplies for her family, and finally, for the person too sick to cross to receive the medical care they need. These people don't need us to change their lifestyle, but only provide them with a bridge, a Bridge of Hope.

**My desire is to share the focus** of this mission project with family, friends, and co-workers, allowing them to search their hearts, and if they so passionately choose, support this project and experience God's blessings in their own lives. And when the bridge is finished, and we see the picture of a village of God's people standing on that bridge, rejoicing and praising Him, we can all say, "I'm really glad I decided to support this mission project".

## **Bridge of Hope - Faith Message**

### **Jesus Walks on the Water**

#### **Scripture Emphasis: NCV Matthew Chapter 14, Verses 22-33**

“Immediately Jesus told his followers to get into the boat and go ahead of him across the lake. He stayed there to send the people home. After he had sent them away, he went by himself up into the hills to pray. It was late, and Jesus was there alone. By this time, the boat was already far away from land. It was being hit by waves, because the wind was blowing against it. Between three and six o'clock in the morning, Jesus came to them, walking on the water. When his followers saw him walking on the water, they were afraid. They said, “It’s a Ghost!” and cried out in fear. But Jesus quickly spoke to them, “Have courage! It is I. Do not be afraid.” Peter said, “Lord, if it is really you, then command me to come to you on the water.” Jesus said, “Come.” And Peter left the boat and walked on the water to Jesus. But when Peter saw the wind and the waves, he became afraid and began to sink. He shouted “Lord, save me!” Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught Peter. Jesus said, “Your faith is small. Why do you doubt?” After they got into the boat, the wind became calm. Then those who were in the boat worshiped Jesus and said, “Truly you are the Son of God!”

When his followers saw Jesus walking on the water, they were all afraid. But one person, one believer, was willing to step out of the boat on his faith and go to Jesus, Peter. But as we look at this passage, it almost seems like Peter was unsure at first, not fully trusting in his faith even after Jesus told them “Have courage! It is I.” Maybe Peter just put one toe in to test the water, when he said “Lord, if it is really you, then command me to come to you on the water”. See, Peter was willing to go, but was unsure.

Jesus only called for one person to leave the boat, Peter, “Come.” Why did Jesus do this? So Peter could test his faith; but Jesus already knew. Peter took the first step to get out of the boat, a step of faith. But when Peter saw the wind and the waves, he became afraid, and started to sink, or doubt. Peter shouted “Lord, save me!” Jesus reached out his hand and caught Peter, and took him back to the safety of the boat, where the other believers were.

**Faith is YOU taking the first step, with Jesus ready to take your hand and lead you the rest of the way.**

We all are given different Spiritual Gifts. If you feel Jesus calling to you to get out of the boat, you have to be willing to take the first step. If you feel the need to stay in the boat, then be ready to support the one's stepping out of the boat. Support them with your prayers, your financial resources, and their families while they are away. Then when they come back into the boat, they will be ready to share their experiences with you, so that your faith can be strengthened also.

Faith is also being able to trust God, trust him to take control of the circumstances. Faith is when asked to put your money where your mouth is, you follow through. Faith is when God says for you to do something first before He will bless you, you have the faith and trust to commit, willing to take the first step, a step of faith, even while doubting a little, just like Peter.

### **My Faith**

When I was 15 years old, I attended an Oral Roberts Evangelism healing crusade in Charlotte with my best friend and his dad. I was a relatively new believer. As I sat in the arena, I could barely hear the words. See, over the past several summers, I had suffered with terrible ear infections. Basically, it was do to swimming in pools and the river too much. The only long term solution by the doctor was to wear ear plugs or wax to keep the water out. This solution worked, until I went to the beach earlier that summer. I had forgotten the wax to put in my ears. So I decided to go into the pool without them. And yes, I got terrible ear infections, my ears were badly stopped up.

During the service, Oral Roberts asked everyone to fill out an information card, and on it, to ask God for one thing to be healed from, something physical. I put on my card "God, please heal my ears." These cards were later collected, and I didn't think any more about it. I doubted. As a relatively new believer, my faith was not strong. Then came the time for the healing part of the service. Oral Roberts stepped to the microphone, and explained that lots of people had filled out cards, asking God for specific parts of their body to be healed, but before He would heal, that person had to put forth faith. He explained that ushers would be passing around offering plates in a few minutes. As I heard this, I pulled out my wallet, and took out three old one dollar bills (because I was a good Baptist) which were resting beside the brand new \$20 dollar bill my dad had given me as I left home, to eat with later. As I held out those three dollar bills, anxiously awaiting the offering plate to pass by, I heard Oral Roberts speak these words: "If you want to be healed, you have to have faith, you have to plant a seed, and to do

that, I want you to reach into your wallet and pull out the biggest bill you have – this represents your faith to God.” As I looked down at those three one dollar bills, something inside me said, “Believe”. And at that moment I pulled my wallet back out, and put those three one dollar bills back inside, and took out that brand new \$20 dollar bill and held it in my hand. My best friend saw what I had done, and said “What are you doing?” I said, I want my ears to be healed, and this is what he said I have to do. (My friend’s dad just looked over – didn’t say a word – I’m not sure how strong his faith actually was, but I was testing mine – either with a miracle or a loss of \$20) As the offering plate passed, I placed my \$20 bill into it, and prayed for faith and healing for my ears. Then came the moment. Oral Roberts began to pray; again I could hardly hear him for the infection in my ears. Then he said, “By the power of the Holy Spirit, I command you to be healed”, and then he clapped his hands together - loudly. I literally felt the Spirit of God move over me, and immediately my ears were opened. “OH MY GOD!” I exclaimed. My friend looked over at me, and said “what?” I said, “I have been healed. I can hear everything so clearly now, like I haven’t been able to in weeks!”

**But just because you have faith at a particular moment and want a miracle to happen, it may not happen immediately. In this one occurrence, mine did. But other prayers have not. Many times we have to wait on the Lord, his timing, his will, and it may take years before we realize His blessing.**

### **What about you?**

What will your first step of faith be? Maybe you’re listening to this and saying, “I know exactly what you’re talking about, Thomas”; while others may be saying “I still don’t understand what you mean by “stepping out on faith”?”

Stepping out on faith may mean stepping out of the boat. Some may say “If it’s going to Nicaragua, then I’m not called to do that.” But if not Nicaragua, then maybe a Mission Trip to Mississippi or Kentucky, even with another church. Ask your Pastor to find out how you can join another church on their Mission Trip; by going it may change your life and the others you tell when you get back. But still others may say, I feel more comfortable in the boat. That’s alright, because Jesus only called one person out of the boat when he said to Peter “Come.”. Everyone else stayed in the boat. But be prepared to support those that do step out of the boat.

But staying in the boat doesn't mean you can just stay in the middle of the stream, only looking straight ahead at the calm waters. Staying in the boat means you can still "build bridges", looking for opportunities to witness to people. Some will say, but I don't feel comfortable talking to people about Jesus. Then plant seeds, and let Jesus grow them. What do I mean by that? Pray to God to show you opportunities everyday where you can "step out on faith", trusting God to take control of the circumstances, and plant seeds in other peoples lives, people who may be stranded on a rock, someone who needs just a little bit of help – show them a Christian cares about them. You have to ask God to show you the opportunities, and he will. The Lord will show you the person, the situation, the need, and will lay on your heart how to help them, and how much. But just know too, helping someone must be inspired and heart felt, because if it's not, you will be doing it for the wrong reason.

#### **NCV Matthew Chapter 6, Verse 1**

"Be careful! When you do good things, don't do them in front of people to be seen by them. If you do that, you will have no reward from your Father in Heaven."

Let me give you some examples of planting seeds.

#### **Your Money**

When you're standing in line at the grocery store, and you're the third person in line, and you notice the cashier looking over the register tape, and a lady looking over her groceries – slowly pushing items to the side – items she did not have enough money to purchase. And while she does, everyone in line becomes restless, because they are ready to get home to their families, because it's Christmas Eve. And then, the lady behind you "steps out" and trusts God to take over the circumstances, and approaches the cashier with a \$20 dollar bill, and says "I will pay the difference". And then looks at the lady and says "Jesus loves you; Merry Christmas". And as the cashier goes to hand this lady back her change, the lady says "Give that to her too." That's willing to be the one to "step out", and say "Jesus, I will help her, I will build the bridge". Now, what about the seed part? That's simple, this person just planted seeds in everyone who was standing there witnessing what just happened, that maybe next time they (including myself) will be willing to "step out" and do the same thing for somebody else. And a seed in the woman's heart she just helped. You plant the seeds, and Jesus will grow them.

When you stop by the busy produce stand, and purchase six tomatoes for \$3.00, knowing you will not eat them all. Then you see a very poor man on a bicycle as he passes by and looks over at all the new vegetables, staring. And as you leave, you pull up beside him, roll down your window and say, "Here, take this." And as he reaches in the window to take the tomato from your hand, he looks you dead in the eyes and softly says, "Thank you". And you are so captivated at that moment that you can say nothing back, only stare into that man's eyes, because you can't believe what you just did – that you "stepped out" to help someone, you built a bridge to this man, trusting God to take control of the circumstances, and it was appreciated, and you leave feeling more blessed than him. Acts of kindness, that's what people need. Not the big things, just little – simple deeds.

### **Your Time**

When the lady stands up in front of the church, and holds up her hands showing everyone her physical disabilities, and says "I cannot drive. I depend on someone for everything, to take me to get the medicine I need, to take me to my doctor's appointments, and the one thing I now know, people will give you their money and people will give you their advice, but people will not give you their TIME." And after she said that, still not one person stood up to say "I will take you." And I will never forget those words she spoke that Sunday morning.

When did you last "build a bridge" and give someone your time? Maybe you take the time to stop and help the person who has run out of gas. As you pass, he holds up a gas can and a \$5 dollar bill, so you stop, take the five gallon gas can, and bring it back to him full of gas, and then hand him back his \$5, because you know he needs it more than you do. And as you go to leave, he calls you an "angel", because it's Sunday morning and nobody else had stopped to help him – maybe because he wasn't wearing a suit, but an old t-shirt and cutoff blue jeans. Maybe because people didn't want to be late for church; but they're the ones who missed out on the true blessing, the true meaning of being a Christian.



**Scripture Emphasis: NCV Matthew Chapter 25, Verses 34-40**

“Then the King will say to the people on his right, ‘Come, my Father has given you his blessing. Receive the kingdom God has prepared for you since the world was made. I was hungry, and you gave me food, I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink, I was alone and away from home, and you invited me into your house. I was without clothes, and you gave me something to wear. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.’

Then the good people will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and give you food, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you alone and away from home and invite you into our house? When did we see you without clothes and give you something to wear? When did we see you sick or in prison and care for you?’ Then the King will answer, ‘I tell you the truth, anything you did for even the least of my people here, you also did for me.’

**Ken Frantz**, the founder of Bridges to Prosperity, recently shared this with me, “Building bridges not only help others cross, but demonstrates the power of the Cross”.

**Song – The Motions**

**Finally**, a dear friend emailed me these words of encouragement, even as I searched out my own heart and purpose: “We all must remember that “life” is a journey not a destination and as with any journey, serving the Lord + loving people = purpose. AND we are all challenged to “get out of the boat”...”move beyond comfort”...”love without limit”...That is where we’ll discover not only who we truly are BUT the bounty of Christ.”

**Now**, what about my question about being **chosen** for this project, a sign from the Lord to “get out of the boat”? Actually, on the flight from Miami to Managua, God answered that prayer when I pulled out this daily devotional book on the plane, one I had picked up at church two weeks before the trip and not yet opened, and as I opened it to DAY 1, and saw it was on Matthew Chapter 14 where Jesus calls to Peter to get out of the boat and to come to him on the water, tears streamed down my face.

## DAY I

*But Jesus spoke to them at once. "Don't be afraid," he said. "Take courage. I am here!"*


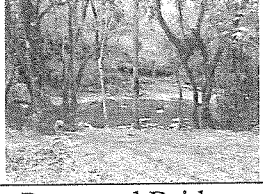

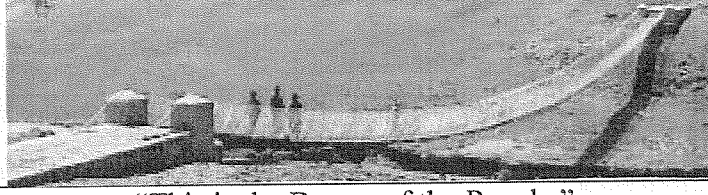

*Then Peter called to him, "Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water." "Yes, come," Jesus said.*

*So Peter went over the side of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus.*

MATTHEW 14:27-29 NLT

**W**hen fear shapes our lives, safety becomes our god. When safety becomes our god, we worship the risk-free life. Can the safety lover do anything great? Can the risk-averse accomplish noble deeds? For God? For others? No. The fear-filled cannot love deeply. Love is risky. They cannot give to the poor. Benevolence has no guarantee of return. The fear-filled cannot dream wildly. What if their dreams sputter and fall from the sky? The worship of safety emasculates greatness. No wonder Jesus wages such a war against fear.

*Imagine Your Life Without Fear*

 <p>Existing River Crossing</p>	<p><b>“Bridge of Hope”</b></p> <p>Sandy Level Baptist Church Nicaragua Bridge 408 Blythewood Road Blythewood, SC 29016</p>	 <p>Proposed Bridge Location</p>
<p>“Building bridges not only help others cross, but demonstrates the power of the Cross.” Ken Frantz, Volunteer &amp; Founder of Bridges to Prosperity, Inc.</p>		
<p>Sandy Level Baptist Church’s Nicaraguan Mission Team is partnering with the Bridges to Prosperity organization to design and build a 215 foot suspended-cable pedestrian bridge across the Bul Bul river near Matiguas, Nicaragua. This bridge will greatly benefit the Patastule Community during the rainy months of June, July and August, when the Bul Bul river becomes impassable. Thus villagers must travel two hours to an alternate crossing which may also be impassable due to heavy rain.</p> <p>The bridge will benefit many people whose lives and well being depend on crossing the river such as the teacher who teaches the community school children; a farmer that sells fresh milk in the nearby town; a mother who gets needed supplies for her family; and a person who is too sick to cross the river to receive medical attention. The villagers are not expecting us to change their lifestyle. They are excitingly anticipating a <u>Bridge of Hope</u> that will greatly assist in meeting their basic needs.</p> <p>On April 23, 2010, our mission team went to Nicaragua. We met with the Director of Operations for Bridges to Prosperity, the villagers, the Mayor and council leaders of Matiguas, and the Town Manager. The purpose of the meeting was to make sure our mission team had the support of all parties involved. The meeting was very successful. You could see the excitement in the eyes of everyone! During this weekend, the preliminary field work was completed, which includes the bridge centerline, distance measurements, foundation locations, and design calculations. We were also able to determine the availability of building materials, which are budgeted at \$25,000. Construction of the bridge is scheduled to begin in January 2011, to be completed in nine to twelve weeks.</p> <p>When this bridge is complete and God’s people are standing on it rejoicing and praising Him, we can all say, “I am really glad I decided to support this mission project”.</p> <p>Prayers are coveted. Called volunteers are welcome. HIS name will be glorified!</p>		
 <p>Meeting at Bridge Site</p>	 <p>“This is the Dream of the People.” Matiguas Town Manager</p>	 <p>Depicted Image of Completed Bridge</p>

You may not be able to go to Matiguas or be personally called to build the bridge, but you can be of assistance. I ask each person to search your heart to see if God will lead you to passionately support this mission project. I truly believe you will experience God's blessing in your life. Please consider sharing this mission project with your family and friends.

Any amount that you donate would be greatly appreciated. Even the smallest amount will do great things in the hands of the Lord.

If you would like to contribute to this mission project, please mail your donation to:

Sandy Level Baptist Church  
Nicaragua Bridge  
P.O. Box 518  
Blythewood, SC 29016

Checks should be made payable to Sandy Level Baptist Church and designated as "Nicaragua Bridge".

100% of contributions will go toward the purchase of materials for the bridge. Any excess contributions will go toward the building of another bridge. Each volunteer is responsible for their own lodging, transportation and meals.

PLEASE NOTE:

Contributions of \$500 or more will be given special recognition. Your Name, your Church Name, In Memory of Name, or In Honor of Name will be inscribed on a plaque on the bridge and you will receive photos. Please return this form with your contribution.

Amount: \_\_\_\_\_ Plaque Info: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Name and Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I do not want any recognition for my contribution. I wish to remain anonymous.

☐ Bridge Sponsorship and Naming Rights - \$10,000 contribution

Your name will be inscribed on a plaque on the bridge. You will receive photos of the construction, a video of the project, and credit on the website of Bridges to Prosperity.

“ \_\_\_\_\_ Suspended Bridge”

Naming Rights Example: “Ken Frantz Suspended Bridge”

Note: Ken Frantz is the founder of Bridges to Prosperity. Without his vision, hard work and dedication, this bridge building program would not exist as it does today.

For questions, more information, or for a Bridge of Hope presentation and Faith Message, please contact Thomas Black at (803) 786-7603.