

August 2023



Dear Family and Friends,

“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

John 1:5

Imagine a darkness so black, you can feel it. I was asked, “Do you ever have doubts?” I answered, “When I was young, I did, but not anymore. Through the years I have come to believe that there is no other reasonable alternative to what I believe to be true. I know the Word of God is true, because it actually describes the complete brokenness and darkness of my heart. If Christ is not who he said he is, I can see no other reasonable alternative. So I don’t doubt anymore.” John next said, “That praying out loud thing, I don’t know about that. I don’t think I can do that.”

The origins of our story originate over 500 years ago. In Guatemala we live among the descendants of the Mayan people. Our city is home to one of the greatest Mayan kingdoms in history, the ancient fortress-city called Qumarkaj. The ruins of this ancient civilization are within a mile and a 1/2 of our modern city of Santa Cruz del Quiche. The Mayan people were extremely pagan in their beliefs. The worship of nature and animals was a huge part of their belief system. One of the strange practices they had involved a sport. Many Central America civilizations had a ballgame that used a large ten pound rubber ball and had a court consisting of two slanted walls with a vertical goal on each side. The game was played with the body, hips, knees, feet, and the shoulders to hit the ball and try to get it through the hoop. The only part of the body you couldn’t use was the hands. The most bazaar part of this ritual sport is that the Most Valuable Player, (MVP) of the winning team is said to have won the high honor of representing his people to go into the spiritual underworld and fight the evil spirits to keep them away from his family and the people. In order to be able to do this the MVP would be sacrificed.

The gateway to the spiritual underworld was believed to be through a cave. Once sacrificed the spirit of the warrior would enter into the cave to do battle. This is the part of the ancient myth that intersects with our time. That ancient cave still exists today. The cave is located directly 40 feet below the plaza alter. The walls of the cave are coated with black soot from the exhaust of the thousands of ritual candles Mayan priests have burned through the years, just as the present Mayan priests continue to do today. We often take our mission groups from the U.S. to the sight to help them understand the culture that many of the children of Casa De Mi Padre have grown up in. The area has several archeological ruins. When we visit the site, we often encounter a Mayan priest performing his ritual activities. I take the opportunity to talk the reality of false religion and how it compares to biblical truths of Scripture.

For last part of our tour we venture into what Mayan tradition considers the entrance to the underworld, the cave below the plaza. I lead the team to the back into the cave, (30 meters) and use the opportunity to discuss the words of Christ. That day it sounded like this: “Everybody try to come a little closer to the sound of my voice. This is the cave Mayan’s believe to be the entrance to the underworld we talked about earlier. Let’s take a moment and think about the words of Jesus. I want everyone to turn off your cell phone, flashlights and screens.” I blew out a couple ritual candles that were burning. As the final light was extinguished, it became very dark. It is a darkness so black, it seems you can feel it. I continued, “This is a clear representation of what it means to live apart from Christ. People who don’t know the Lord, spiritually speaking, live in a darkness more real than what you are experiencing in this moment. They are completely lost in spiritual darkness and are stumbling around, not knowing where they are or where they are going.”

“Jesus said, ‘I am the light of the world.’ He is the one who gives light to all men. As followers of Christ, we need to understand and remember how spiritually lost people without Christ really are. It is our job to let people know their need for Christ and what God has done for them. Let’s turn around and begin to walk toward the light. Try to keep your cell phones off if possible and walk toward the light.” By this time our eyes had adjusted to the darkness. As we turned and began to walk towards the entrance, we quickly saw a glimmer of light. As we continued to walk towards the entrance, the light became so bright. I always leave the cave thanking God, he has allowed me to see who Christ is.



Shane Sanderson
Executive Director
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Normally I am always the last one out of the cave because I am the first one in, leading the way. But this time was different. John, one of the men on the trip who had followed me into the cave asked me if he could go behind me. This would make him the last one out. It seemed like a strange request. But I said, "Sure."

Our last team included several phenomenal people who really love the Lord. We had the Blankenship family. Dan and Karen are experienced mission team leaders who brought their grandchildren. Another couple, John and Polly brought their two teens. Polly is a very experienced and capable lawyer. Her love for the Lord is deep and her desire to see the Lord touch people around her and her family was strongly evident. Her husband, John, is a life-experienced retired police officer and now businessman. He has an insightful and inquisitive heart to understand what is happening around him.

John came with spiritual questions. That became quickly evident by a conversation he and I had at the beginning of our trip. He expressed his struggles with doubts about God. He also shared his concern about praying out loud. I tried to address his doubts and explained I have come to see no reasonable alternative to the deepest questions of life, that the Bible has clear answers for.

As the week progressed there was a change in John's life. At one point I felt it was right to ask John to pray for one of our mealtimes. He said, "I knew that was coming." And he prayed out loud. As the days passed John began to share in our devotion times and lead in prayer the rest of the trip. His spiritual insights during the devotions, were biblical based and very meaningful. His prayers were heartfelt and precious. Something had changed.

The last morning of our trip we were beginning breakfast. Fawn, who had led the team, was sitting to my left and John was seated across from her. Fawn began to speak to him about where he was at in his relationship with the Lord. She asked him if he had ever put his faith in Christ. She added, "John that time could even be right now." John quickly responded, "I have already done that." I asked John, "When did you do that?" He answered, "This week." I said, "You did, Where?" He responded, "In the cave." John said he realized he was not where he needed to be to walk toward the light. It was a great blessing to hear John say that. We knew something had definitely changed. Imagine, in a place historically and presently known for its dark cultural practices for hundred of years, Jesus spoke to John's heart. The light of Jesus shined in the darkness and the darkness could not overcome it. Praise God! I was so thankful for Fawn's heart to graciously ask John that morning where he was with the Lord. And to hear John's bold responses certainly blessed our heart. Praise God!

Needed Prayers: Since many of our older children have moved from Casa De Mi Padre this year, we have received many new children. Please pray for the children and for us as we strive to communicate God's grace, truth, and love to them. Pray they can see the light of Christ through us.

Construction Needs: Please remember our **30,000 Match Gift Challenge**. At this time, we desperately need to raise these funds so we can continue to build the permanent home for our children and those yet to come. Please share the need with others. If you would desire to help, you can send a check to Child Rescue and put in the memo "Matching Gift Challenge." Or go online at givetocasa.com to help and put "Matching Gift Challenge" in the comment section.

The Girl's House: Please also remember the furniture needs for the girls' house. We want to be able to move into the new house this next month but need more furniture. We are \$7000.00 short of our goal. Please pray with us for this need. If you would like to help, make your check to Child Rescue and write "Girl's Furniture" in the memo line or go online to: givetocasa.com. Direct your gifts to the Child Rescue Special Projects fund and write "Girl's furniture" in the comment section. Thank you!

No words can express the joy we have seeing the Lord at work in our children's lives and in the lives of those who come and serve with us on mission.

Let The Light Shine!
Love
Shane
Joseph Shane Sanderson
Thank you as always
for your kind and gracious
support and prayers.
We love you!