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MalumGhat a Little Joy

Joy Kelly

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SENIOR THESIS APPROVAL

This Honors thesis entitled

“MalumGhat a Little Joy”

written by

Joy Kelly

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for completion of the

Carl Goodson Honors Program

meets the criteria for acceptance

and has been approved by the undersigned readers.

(Name) thesis director

(Name) second reader

(Name) third reader

honors program director

April 16, 2012

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Introduction..... | 1 |
| 1. Always Read Facebook Messages..... | 3 |
| <i>Creepy, Crawly Lessons Learned</i> | 6 |
| 2. Faith..... | 10 |
| <i>Lost in Translation Lessons Learned</i> | 14 |
| 3. Vending Machines..... | 17 |
| <i>Lessons Learned in Nepal</i> | 19 |
| 4. Loneliness..... | 23 |
| <i>Animal Lessons Learned</i> | 26 |
| 5. Home..... | 28 |
| <i>Bathroom and Boat Lessons Learned</i> | 31 |
| 6. I am Spoken For..... | 34 |
| <i>Same Different Lessons Learned</i> | 36 |
| 7. Like the Fragrance After the Rain..... | 38 |
| <i>More Lessons Learned</i> | 40 |
| 8. Kids..... | 44 |
| <i>Family Lessons Learned</i> | 47 |
| 9. Hospitality..... | 50 |
| <i>Food Lessons Learned</i> | 53 |
| 10. Time..... | 56 |
| <i>Transportation Lessons Learned</i> | 59 |
| 11. Still 5'2"..... | 62 |
| <i>Lessons Learned in Thailand</i> | 65 |
| 12. Dirty Feet..... | 71 |
| <i>A Prayer</i> | 74 |
| <i>Lesson Learned</i> | 75 |
| Acknowledgements..... | 76 |
| Bibliography..... | 77 |

Introduction

Upon my return from studying abroad, people asked, “How was Bangladesh?” as if they were asking about a relative I visited in Florida. “How was Uncle Fred?” Smiling, I replied “Good, I loved it.” The conversation typically turned to other matters. Others asked, “What is the biggest thing you learned while you were gone?” While judging how long the asker wished to listen, I narrowed my extensive response to one or two key points.

Living in the tiny, yet populous village of Malumghat, Bangladesh, as I participated in Hands-On during the spring of 2011, I learned a myriad of new lessons each day. Some were as simple as always covering your food and putting it in the refrigerator so ants would not devour it. Other lessons were deeper, such as learning that poverty and suffering know no race, religion, or gender.

Through sharing the lessons I learned during my time in Bangladesh, I hope to demonstrate in this thesis that God can use anyone anywhere. As Christians, we tend to glorify missionaries, ministry leaders, or even popular Christian authors. Placing them on a spiritual pedestal, we feel as if they are many miles ahead of us in their Christian walk. However, I discovered that traveling thousands of miles to the other side of the world changed what I wore, when I slept, and what I ate, but it did not change the core of who I am. As I acclimatized to the unfamiliar Bengali culture, Scripture proved to be a familiar comfort. Just as I did not change, the truth of Scripture remained consistent. Scripture pervades life, regardless of location.

As I scoured my mind for thesis topics, my advisor asked, “So why don’t you just use your blogs and write your thesis about your time in Bangladesh?”

“I can do that?” came my reply.

You may be thinking, “Is this thesis a devotional book, a compilation of blogs, or a cultural study?” Yes. A category is difficult to assign a work of this manner. Research was conducted, but not with the typical methods. My research stems from living in Bangladesh, visiting Bengali homes and villages, and studying the Scriptures and other Christian works. Through interweaving everyday activities, Scriptural application, and Bengali perspective, I hope to encourage fellow believers to look and listen for the ways Scripture surrounds their own lives, regardless of background or location.

“A picture is worth a thousand words,” or so the old colloquialism goes. A picture can convey a deep sense of a place that is futile to try to describe in words. This being the case, I have provided multiple pictures, accompanied by more light-hearted lessons learned, to provide the reader with a feel for the culture. The reader paints his or her own picture of Bangladesh from the written text, and through the pictures is able to develop a deeper sense of connection.

MalumGhat a Little Joy is a piece of my story. Its purpose is not to say “Look at the neat opportunities I had,” but rather to serve as an encouragement to believers to see that God is not limited by our views, culture, or setting. While God transcends culture, he also employs it to enable us to learn more about Him.

Always Read Facebook Messages

During my junior high days, I read the biography of Amy Carmichael, an Irishwoman who dedicated her life to serving the Lord in India. The idea of India fascinated me. Around the same time, Caedmon's Call released an album that they had recorded after returning from India. Strange as it sounds, I knew that God would send me there someday.

I have never considered myself to be an "out-of-the-box" person. I read the directions for everything, from the shampoo bottle to the box of macaroni and cheese. Sure, I enjoy being creative, but I always seem to color in the lines. Doing so can be a wonderful thing, but every once in a while an opportunity comes along that turns the page and suddenly you are faced with a new picture and a new set of crayons, and lines that do not constitute any sort of "normal" box. Maybe this has happened to you. As you have perhaps guessed, it happened to me. The summer before my junior year of college, my world was flipped upside down. Maybe it was only turned sideways. Either way, my life changed in a big way.

When I started college, I never thought that I would become "that" student who changes her major five times, and I was not. Only four. The final time was right before my junior year began. I had spent half of the summer working at a family camp, and by the end of my time there, I was tired of explaining to parents that I had no idea what I wanted to do with my life. After much prayer, discussion with my family, and pro and con lists (I told you that I am not very "out-of-the-box"), I changed my major one last time. And that atypical step was the first stroke of the crayon that disregarded the picture and started a new line.

Two or three days after I made this epic decision—well, I felt that it was epic at the time—I received an unforgettable Facebook message. It was from Heather Long, a lady at my church who I had met once, maybe four years before. I knew her sisters and her mom a little bit, but not well. In her message, she explained that she, her husband, and their four children were traveling to Bangladesh to serve as missionaries for two years. Heather and her husband, Jon, had served there before, so she told me all about where they lived and what it was like. Then I got to the heart of the message:

Joy, what I'm asking is a huge request. I'm wondering if you'd be willing to pray about taking some time off from school and accompanying us in Bangladesh for a semester or so.

God is doing amazing things in Bangladesh! It is a terribly lost & dark nation - only 1/10 of 1% of the people are true believers. But God is moving and working. We can't wait to get there and be a part of His plan!

Joy, I completely understand that you are in school and that you have plans. I just wanted to tell you about this opportunity and ask if you would please be willing to pray about it.

My heart sank and a knot troubled my stomach. Similar in culture, food, and dress, Bangladesh is India's next door neighbor. This was my chance to go. God had suddenly dropped the perfect opportunity into my lap, and if only I hadn't just changed my major, it would have been feasible to spend the semester in Bangladesh, and still finish college within four years. But now, it seemed there was no hope of being able to go. I knew God would get me to Southeast Asia one day; I thought I would just have to keep waiting. I told my family about the opportunity, but there was nothing we could do about it, or so we thought. A few

weeks later, I mentioned the opportunity to my roommate, who encouraged me to pursue it, and see if maybe, just maybe, it could work.

I remember praying, “God, this decision is too big for me, if you want this to happen, a whole lot of doors are going to have to open.” And that is exactly what happened. Doors were not just opened, they were knocked down. It still took a lot of meetings, preparation, prayer, and hard work, but God’s hand was evident in the entire process. On January 23, 2011, I boarded a plane with a family I barely knew, and we traveled to the other side of the world together. God sent me, an ordinary, in-the-box college kid to Bangladesh to serve Him. Another crayon scribble away from the lines of normalcy.

For years, I thought that God was going to send me to India—and maybe one day He will—but instead, He changed out my plans for His. If it had not been for that Facebook message, I would not have given the nation of Bangladesh a thought.

Whether you are a world traveler or someone who has never left your home state, this simple collection of my thoughts and observations while I lived in Bangladesh is my invitation to you to peek into a culture incredibly different from our own. My hope is that through these stories and thoughts, you see that Scripture and life, life and Scripture are inextricably intertwined, no matter where you are. Interspersed throughout these thoughts, I have also included a few light-hearted lessons that I learned during my time in Bangladesh. Join me in this journey of looking at life from a different perspective, no box necessary.

Lessons Learned:



It is common to see little lizards, known as Tik-tikkis, crawling around the walls, shower, and ceiling. Sometimes they even live in dormant air-conditioning units.



If you feel like there is something crawling on you, there probably is.

Lessons Learned:



Occasionally, you just have to fish the ants out of the cup of water and drink it anyway. Other times, you have to constantly shoo at least 4 flies away from your cup and pretend that they are not loaded with germs.

Lessons Learned:



You do not always have to kill spiders. Some large spiders are rumored to eat cockroaches. I let this one live and did not see a cockroach in my room for two months!

Lessons Learned:



When you help a giant beetle out, and turn him right side up again he makes a noise that sounds like a wind-up toy.

Faith

Picture the scene. A crowd has gathered around Jesus. A father, desperate for his demon-possessed son to be healed, approaches Jesus, saying “I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him.” With weary anger, Jesus reprimands the crowd: “O unbelieving and perverse generation, how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me.” He rebukes the demon and the boy is healed immediately. Whispering among each other, the disciples each wonder why their own attempts had failed. As the crowd dissipates, the disciples take Jesus aside and sheepishly ask, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?”

He replied, “Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘move from here to there’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you (Matthew 17:20).¹

I have heard this all my life in Sunday school and chapel and camp, etc. I’m sure I’ve even taught it once or twice. We hear it and we teach it, but I wonder if we really get it.

Sometimes God does things that don’t make sense to us. Other times, God calls us to do things that don’t seem to make sense. Take Noah, for example. God called him to build an ark for a flood and it had not rained yet! But Noah was faithful and God was faithful too.

Then there is Gideon. Judges 6 tells us that the angel of the Lord came to him while he was threshing wheat in the wine cellar, hiding it from the cruel hand of the Midianites. The angel greets Gideon, saying, “The Lord is with you, mighty warrior.” Imagine Gideon’s

¹ All Scripture is quoted from the *NIV Archaeological Study Bible: An Illustrated Walk through Biblical History and Culture : New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005).

the angel must be speaking to him. The angel continues, informing Gideon that God has chosen him to save the Israelites from the merciless Midianites. "But Lord," Gideon asks, "how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family." Gideon is not only the youngest member of his family, he is also from one of the smaller tribes in Israel. There is nothing especially significant about Gideon. Three times, he asks God for a sign, to ensure that God will be faithful to his promises. God is faithful each time and He enables Gideon to save the Israelites from the Midianites. Yet the victory in battle is shadowed by a sad end to the story. Gideon takes gold from the plunder, fashions it into a fancy priestly garment, and it becomes an idol to Gideon, his family, and the Israelites.

"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see" (Heb. 11:1). Noah obeys God in faith. Gideon questions God, obeys God in faith, and then disobeys God. Neither of these men is without fault, but God still chooses to use them for his glory. Noah and Gideon are both mentioned in the Hebrews 11 "hall of faith."

As I raised funds to head to Bangladesh, people very often asked, "How is the fundraising?" I watched their eyes widen as I replied, "It's going well. I still need about \$5,000." Nonchalantly reassuring them that God is faithful and capable, I feigned that like Noah, Abraham, or any of the "Hall of Faith-ers" from Hebrews 11, I was resiliently confident that God would provide. However, more often than I would like to admit, I was like Gideon. "Lord, if you want me to go to Bangladesh, just send me one more sign." My journal entries are crowded with requests such as, "Before it seemed like Bangladesh was the right/best choice, that it was clearly the thing to do. Now I'm afraid, and I'm not sure why...Help me see your plan

as well. Could it be Bangladesh? You are a big God and I'm just a little person. Could you really want me to do something so big? Give me peace I pray."

Unlike the story of Gideon, God does not always choose to provide signs for us as he did then. Sometimes He calls us to get on that boat or, in my case plane, and wait to see what He will do next.

God provided in huge ways for me to go to Bangladesh. Anonymously people slipped money under my door or sent it to me in my mailbox. Others bought t-shirts sold as a fundraiser, and others simply donated. The generosity of those around me was astounding. Though I may have had my wide-eyed moments of disbelief, I am ever learning to rest and trust in God's faithfulness.

The disciples began their journey with little faith, which God cultivated and grew, raising up powerful men of God, instrumental in laying the foundations of our faith. God really can use anyone. And though we do not walk with Jesus in the same way that the disciples did, He has sent us his Spirit to be with us and enable us.

Let us learn from Gideon's errors. He forgets how he has seen God work. Instead, he chooses to worship a false idol. Do not forget what the Lord has done in your life. Press on in your faith. God will cultivate it so that it grows even larger than a mustard seed.

Remember the story of Jesus healing the demon-possessed boy? When the father brings his son before Jesus, he also says, "But if you can do anything, take pity on us, and help

us." "if you can'?" said Jesus. Everything is possible for him who believes." May our hearts resonate with the father's earnest reply, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"

Lessons Learned:



Some things just get lost in translation. Please take off your feet before entering...Yikes!

Lessons Learned:



A “moonshine run” means going to the grocery store.

Lessons Learned:



In case you had forgotten why you wanted to eat chocolate, the name of this candy bar is there to remind you.

Vending Machines

During a movie night a few weeks near the end of the fall semester, my roommates and I trekked down three flights of stairs to the first floor and the conveniently located vending machine. With her change carefully counted out, my roommate deposited her coins and pressed the button to select her choice. Jokingly, she explained to us that she always hits the button twice, just in case more than one Coke decides to come out. My next roommate took her turn, and after depositing her coins, just for kicks, she hit the button repeatedly, only to find that she did indeed receive two Cokes! We had a good laugh and a free Coke.

I realized that sometimes this is exactly how I treat God.

The vending machine syndrome:

Step 1: Deposit change (Pray).

Step 2: Press the correct button (B12: Support raising; B9: Visa approval; B5: Plane ticket; etc.)

Step 3: Press the button repeatedly just in case another blessing slips out.

Now, I'm not saying that we shouldn't pray and ask God for things. Certainly we are commanded to do so in Scriptures (Philippians 4:6). And we know that He answers petitions. But I have found that I must be careful of my attitude when I do this petitioning. Do I only go to God when I would like something, so I can press a few buttons, get my Coke, and go? Am I treating God as a vending machine or am I trusting His timing, His plans? Vending machines require no personal interaction. They are quick and convenient, delivering instant gratification. The concept of "vending" corresponds to "selling." I have to give something first before I

receive my request. God is not selling His gifts, He is giving. What God gives, the grace He supplies, is “not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:9). Scripture clearly outlines that “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows” (James 1:17). When personal convenience replaces relationship, I have failed to grasp the crux of presenting my requests to God.

Psalm 16:5 says, “Lord, you alone are my portion and my cup; you make my lot secure.” It is easy to glaze over a verse like this. Oh, yeah, God is my portion, great. We find comfort in it, but we cannot quite figure out why. I had read about God’s being my portion, and I always liked the way it sounded, but I had never stopped to think about what it really meant. I think of the context in which I most often use or hear the term “portion.” What comes to mind? Food. A portion of mashed potatoes or green beans or cheesecake or whatever. “How in the world does that relate to God?” I wondered. Then I begin to understand. Have you heard the colloquialism “my eyes were bigger than my stomach?” When left to fetch our own portions, sometimes we get way too much, other times too little. God’s timing is perfect. God’s giving is perfect. He gives the grace and strength needed for each day. He gives them when you need them. God gives the perfect portion. In giving us just what we need, He makes our lot secure. Our future is held steady in His hands. I will take that over a vending machine any day.

We pray, not as people blindly pushing buttons, hoping for a good outcome, but with expectation and confidence, trusting God’s good timing and plans.

*LORD, you alone are my portion and my cup;
you make my lot secure.*

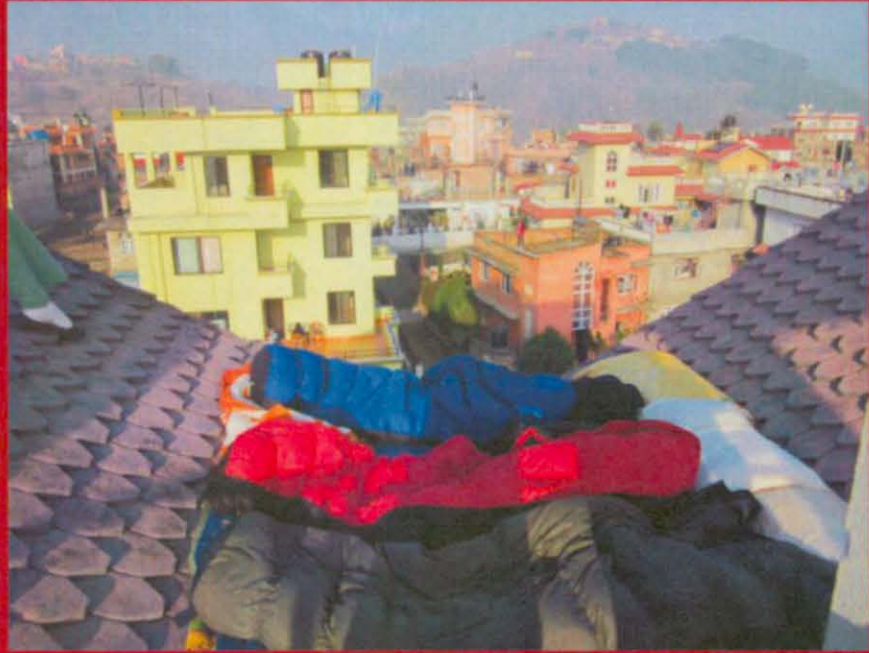
Psalm 16:5

Lessons Learned:



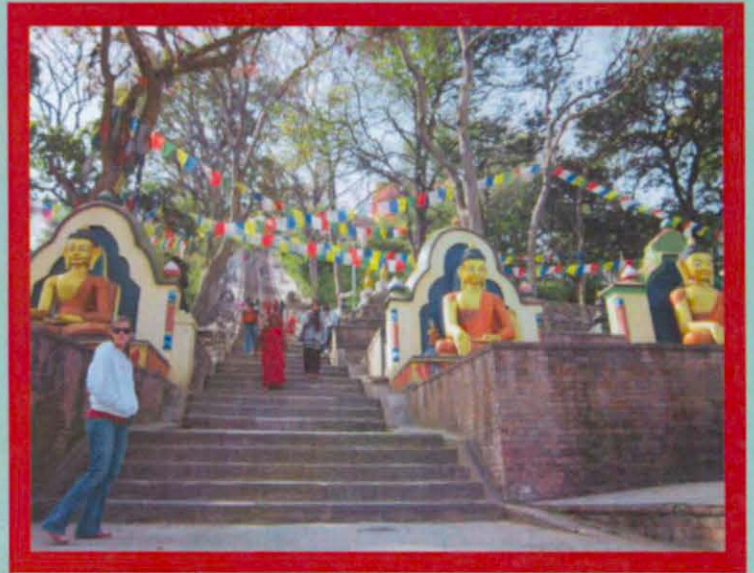
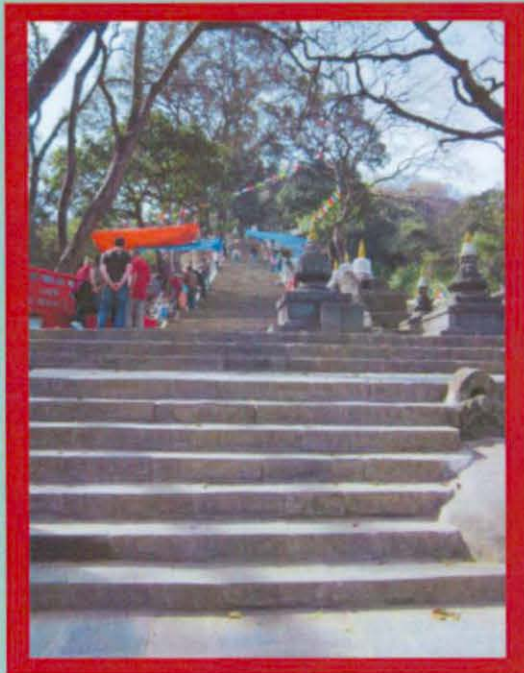
In Nepal, these are considered hills.
The Himalayas are hiding behind
them, covered by the clouds.

Lessons Learned:

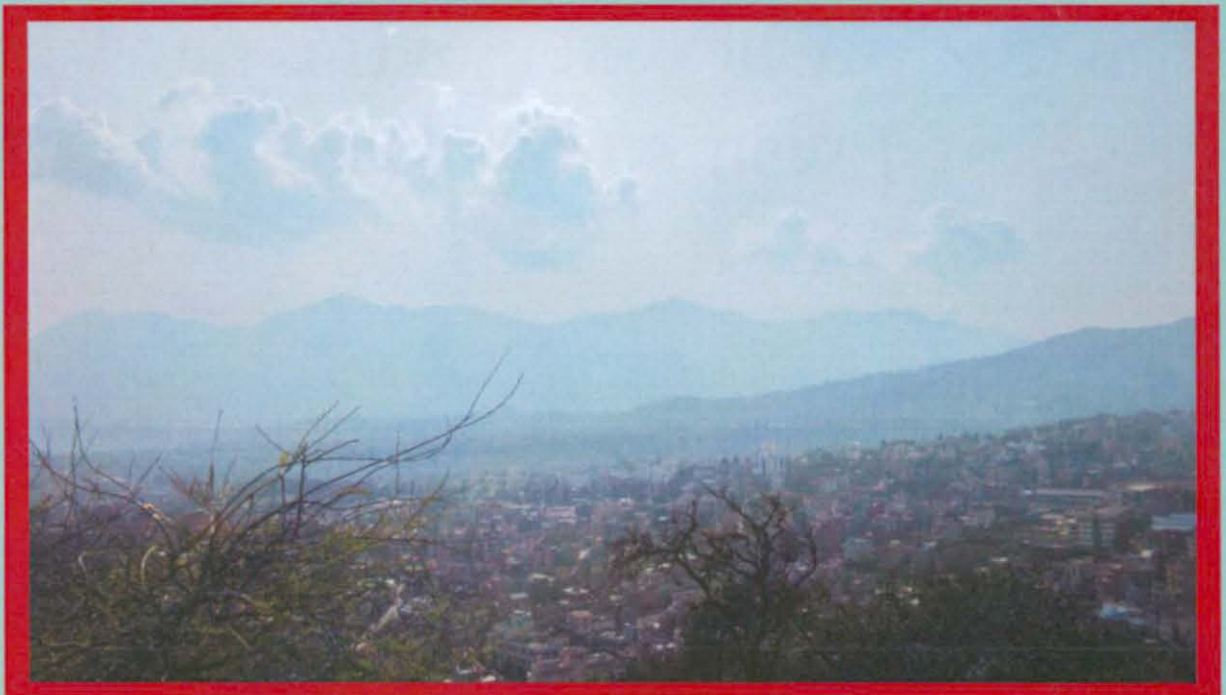


Sleeping on the roof in Nepal is fun, but slightly chilly.

Lessons Learned:



Climbing the 300 steps to reach the Buddhist temple turned tourist attraction is quite the workout, but the view is worth it.



Lessons Learned:



Even a five year old in Nepal
can teach you a new game!

Loneliness

In the 1940s, my grandmother, a young woman from the Midwestern countryside, had just arrived in the thriving metropolis of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Recounting the story to me many years later, she recollected standing at the bustling train station, eagerly searching for a familiar face. Someone, anyone she might know. Hopefully, her eyes scanned the crowd. Yet, her mind knew that she was alone. She says this was one of the loneliest moments of her life.

As weary travelers, we, that is, the Long family and I, entered the Dubai airport sixteen hours after departing from Houston. It was two or three in the morning there. The Islamic call to prayer, the *adhan*, rang out through the sleepy airport. I suddenly realized that I was on the other side of the world. In Dubai, we joined the Longs' friends the Kelleys, another missionary family, headed to their home in Malumghat, Bangladesh. When the Kelleys arrived, there was much excitement of reunion between the two families, but inside of me, a hollow cord of loneliness was struck. Much like my grandmother, I found myself hopefully surveying the crowd. But, no matter how many faces I saw, no one was coming for me. I was alone. It was not the kind of loneliness that makes you want to sit and cry, but rather a loneliness that you feel so deeply, you are not sure what to do with it.

I was blessed to have few truly lonely moments during my stay in Bangladesh. The Longs were absolutely wonderful in letting me be a part of their family. I never felt lonely when I was with them. I was also blessed to be in Bangladesh at the same time as several other young short term missionaries. We had a great number of fun adventures and times together, but sometimes when I was really tired, I longed to be with people that are ok with me just as I

am, quirks and all. At these times, loneliness paid his visit again. I had community with these fellow missionaries in Bangladesh, but it was not the same depth of community that I have with my friendships from home and college.

I would like to clarify that being alone is not the same thing as loneliness. Solitude is something quite different, and something that we, as Christians need. Even Jesus went to “lonely places” (Luke 5:16, Mark 1:45) to pray and escape the chaos of the crowds. Solitude is healthy if we use it as a foundation for community. As believers in Christ, solitude is where we find our community with Christ and with the Holy Spirit (1 Cor.1:9, 2 Cor. 13:14). This is where we start. Sometimes, however, it seems there is no genuine Christian community where we are, and we do not have that fellowship we need. We know that God is there, but it certainly does not always feel like it. These times are difficult, they are not fun, but they are God pushing us to view our relationship with Him as more than mere emotions. Oswald Chambers views it this way: “The greatest spiritual crisis comes when a person has to move a little farther on in his faith than the belief he has already accepted.”² God will give you the strength needed to persevere through these times. Eugene Peterson, author of *The Message*, encourages fellow believers that “Endurance is not a desperate hanging on but a traveling from strength to strength...Perseverance is triumphant and alive.”³

After we press through the lonely times, let us not forget those around us who may also have a lack of true community in their lives. How can we open our eyes to see lonely people

² Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*, (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1935), 259.

³ Eugene Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 127.

around us? Perhaps one solution is to follow Paul's advice in Philippians 2:3-4. Paul addresses the Ephesians, instructing them to "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of others." As Henri Nouwen points out in his book, *Making All Things New*,

Community has little to do with mutual compatibility. Similarities in educational background, psychological make-up, or social status can bring us together, but they can never be the basis for community. Community is grounded in God, who calls us together, and not in the attractiveness of people to each other...The mystery of community is that it embraces all people, whatever their individual differences may be, and allows them to live together as brothers and sisters of Christ and sons and daughters of his heavenly father.⁴

May God show us those who are lonely, that we might help bring them out of loneliness and into genuine community.

*A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling.
God sets the lonely in families, he leads out the prisoners with singing;
but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land.*
Psalm 68:5-6

⁴ Henri Nouwen, *Making All Things New*, (New York: Harper & Row, 2000) 82-83.

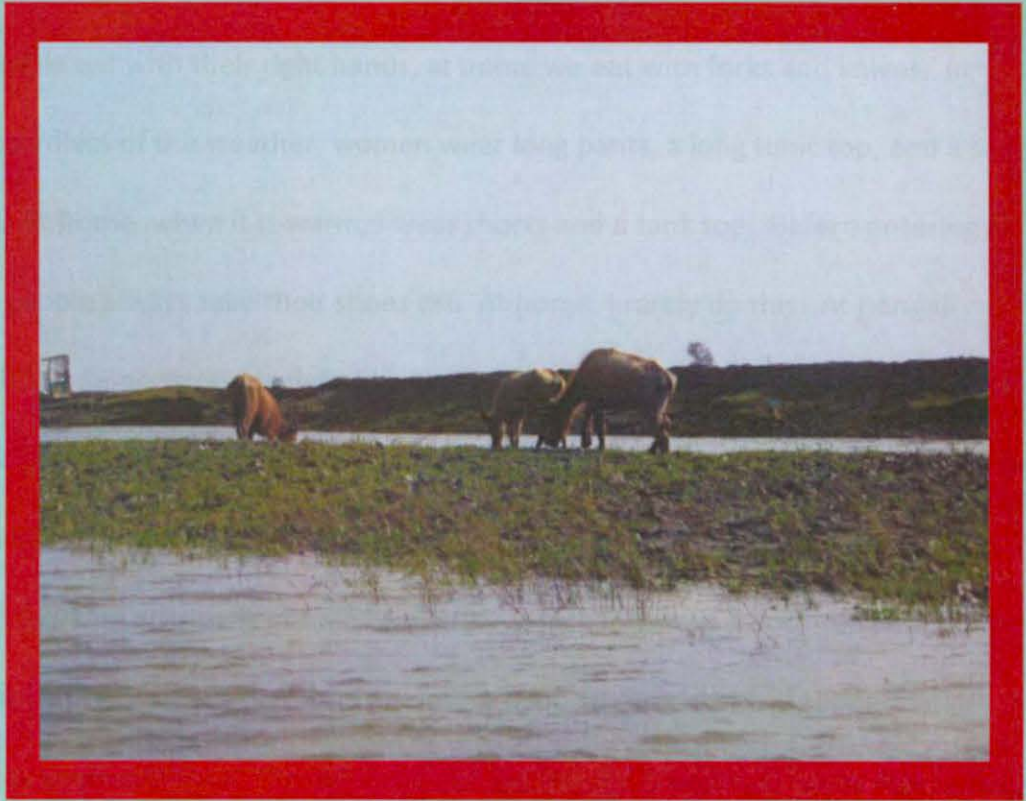
Lessons Learned:



Elephants are very prickly.
It can be quite crowded atop of an elephant!



Lessons Learned:



Let's chase the water buffalo is
a legitimate suggestion.

Also, water buffalo tastes a lot
like beef.

Home

Bombarded by exciting new sights, smells, spices, sounds, people, and language as I settled into life in Bangladesh, I found myself comparing these new experiences to home. In Bangladesh, people eat with their right hands, at home we eat with forks and knives. In Bangladesh, regardless of the weather, women wear long pants, a long tunic top, and a scarf for extra modesty. At home, when it is warm, I wear shorts and a tank top. Before entering a Bengali home, people always take their shoes off. At home, I rarely do this. At Bengali weddings, the bride demonstrates grief of leaving her family by avoiding smiling all day and crying throughout the entire ceremony. If a bride did this at home, everyone would think that something was drastically wrong. In Bangladesh, dark skin is not sought after because it is associated with working outside for much of the day, which is in turn associated with poverty. At home, however, people will pay to visit a tanning salon so their skin will appear darker. The list of differences could continue. Though I was not homesick, thoughts of home flooded my mind.

My mind wandered to the joyful reunion I would have with family and friends. I imagined the hugs and the smiles, and probably a few tears. I dreamt of readily-available hot water, or a quick trip to Wal-Mart. I remembered what it is like to understand what people are saying anywhere that you go. It is the small things we take for granted. I absolutely loved being in Bangladesh, yet sometimes I just could not wait to be home. A yearning deep within me knew that this was simply a temporary home for a few months. The knowledge that my real home awaited me always lingered in my mind.

Maybe what I was doing was like waiting for Heaven. We have wonderful things here on earth. God blesses us with family, friends, food, and _____ (insert your own blessing here), but deep down we know this is not our real home. We know our home awaits us in Heaven, where there will be a more joyful reunion than we can imagine. And so we wait. We yearn for home.

As a Christmas gift, my roommate had "all the friends" write a letter to me for my time in Bangladesh. On top of that, another dear friend from home wrote me a note for each week. Opening my two letters every week, I treasured the encouragement and connection brought to me though I was miles and miles and miles away from the authors. One night as I was lying in bed, waiting for sleep, the thought dawned on me...What is one of the things Paul is known for? Letters. I wonder if that is how the believers felt when they received Paul's letters and vice versa. How they must have cherished each other's words, reading them again and again, feeling that perhaps the miles were not so many after all.

In one such letter to the Philippians, Paul notes, "for me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." Paul continues, "If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body" (Phil. 1: 21-24). Just as I was torn between Bangladesh and home, as Christians, we are torn between the desire to serve on earth, and being with Christ. Perhaps that is why Peter addresses the early Christians "as aliens and strangers in the world" (1 Pet. 2:11).

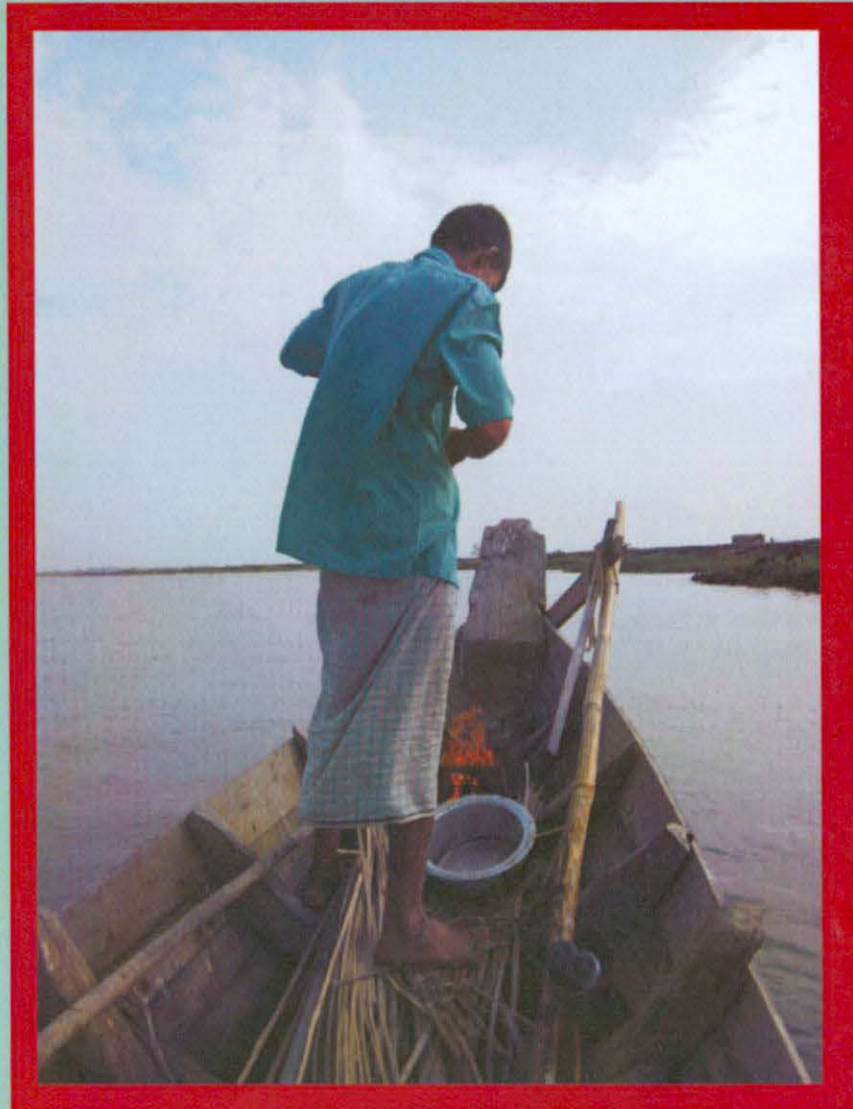
How do we live in light of this? In his letter to the Thessalonians, Paul reminds the believers “for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night...But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief” (5:2, 4).

The best analogy I have heard explaining this came from my college Bible study leader. Waiting to be reunited with Christ is like keeping your house clean. When you keep up with the cleaning and someone drops in for a visit, it is no big deal; the house is clean. But when the house is a disaster zone and someone stops by, it is embarrassing how messy the place is. In the same way, we ought to keep our lives cleaned and ready for Christ’s return. We should live in such a way that our lives will be pure whenever Christ returns or calls us home. Until that day, we wait.

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel.

Philippians 1: 27

Lessons Learned:



Fire on a boat is not always a bad thing. It can be used to make some excellent Bangla cha (tea)!

Lessons Learned:



American port-a-potties are really nothing to complain about.

Lessons Learned:



This is considered a nice bathroom.

I Am Spoken For

"Ajke...amra...Issor...pratona...amra...amar der...char..."

"Today...we...God...pray...we...our...four..." After spending nearly four months in Bangladesh, I was excited to be able to understand even this much of a Bengali church service. Our short American attention spans make it difficult for us to concentrate through a fifteen minute sermon presented in our own language. Imagine sitting in an hour-long sermon presented in a language with four words of which you understand.

I passed the time in Bengali church by letting my thoughts amble through my brain, or by meandering through an arbitrary verse or passage of Scripture. One such morning, I was thinking about how, while I am here, others most always have to speak for me. It's a very humbling experience, not being able to communicate. There are so many questions I would have liked to ask, so many stories I would have liked to have heard, but, really, as far as I ever got was:

"Hi. How are you?"

"Good. How are you?"

"Good."

"My name is Joy. What is your name?"

As I pondered, a verse came to my mind: "The Lord will speak for you; you need only to be still." It seemed like an interesting train of thought, so I followed it. Turns out, I had gotten a little mixed up. The verse, Exodus 14: 14, actually says, "The Lord will fight for you; you need

only to be still." Moses is talking to the Israelites after they have been freed from slavery in Egypt. As I wandered around in Exodus, looking at the context, as all good Ouachitonians are trained to do, a thought struck me. Remember the burning bush? What is one of Moses' excuses for not wanting to go? His speech. As the story unfolds in Exodus 4, God says to Moses, "Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say" (v.12). You would think that if you were talking to a burning bush, and you had just been shown the miracles Moses was shown, this would be a sufficient answer. Not for Moses. He replies, "O Lord, please send someone else to do it" (v. 13). God, whose anger "burned against Moses" (v. 14), comes up with a compromise. Aaron, Moses' brother, will speak for him. "You shall speak to him and put words in his mouth. I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do. He will speak to the people for you, and it will be as if he were your mouth and as if you were God to him" (v. 15). Time and time again, God, through Aaron, speaks for Moses, and Moses for the people of Israel, through whom comes the Savior of the world. What Moses meant as an excuse, God used as a tool to teach Moses to trust Him. I wonder then, if maybe my misremembering was not so far off after all. I wonder if maybe when Moses uttered these words of encouragement to the Israelites, he was playing back in his mind all of the times the Lord had spoken for him. Perhaps he had learned his lesson. And as for me, it really makes depending on someone else to speak for me seem not so bad after all.

Lessons Learned:



Girls across the world talk about the same topics.



Lessons Learned:



Language learning is difficult, especially when the words for “understand” and “vegetable” sound incredibly similar.

Like the Fragrance After the Rain

Bangladesh smells. Seriously, I was warned beforehand, but it was something you cannot really understand until you have been there. It is not really just one smell, but a mixture of smells. Sometimes it is smoke from a burning fire, filth in the streets, the exhaust from buses, dirty livestock, people who do not wear deodorant, etc. etc. Before you feel too sorry for me, please know that it is not as if I felt surrounded or engulfed by a constantly terrible smell. I was fortunate enough not to live in one of the big cities, but was instead surrounded by trees and rice fields. I am happy to inform you that on most days, as I sat in my room, or walked outside, unpleasant odors did not continually assault me. They were certainly present. But every once in a while, a surprisingly pleasant scent would greet my nose. I savored those rare and fleeting moments. No matter where I was, a smile would come across my face as I stopped to take a deep breath and let the sweet scent pervade my lungs.

I wonder if that is all too often what our praise is like to God. It smells. It stinks. But then every once in awhile, He catches a whiff of beautiful fragrance, and savors it, wanting to make it last, and I will bet He cannot help but smile either.

When I was a little girl, my mom used to sing a song to me that said, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, there's just something about that name. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, like the fragrance after the rain..." That has always been my favorite smell. When I think of rain, I think of how the land is refreshed, how things are made new and revived. What a perfect description of our Savior.

They (whoever "they" are) say that smell is one of the strongest sensory compellers of memories. The smell after a fresh rain reminds me of Christ. I wonder if there is a smell that

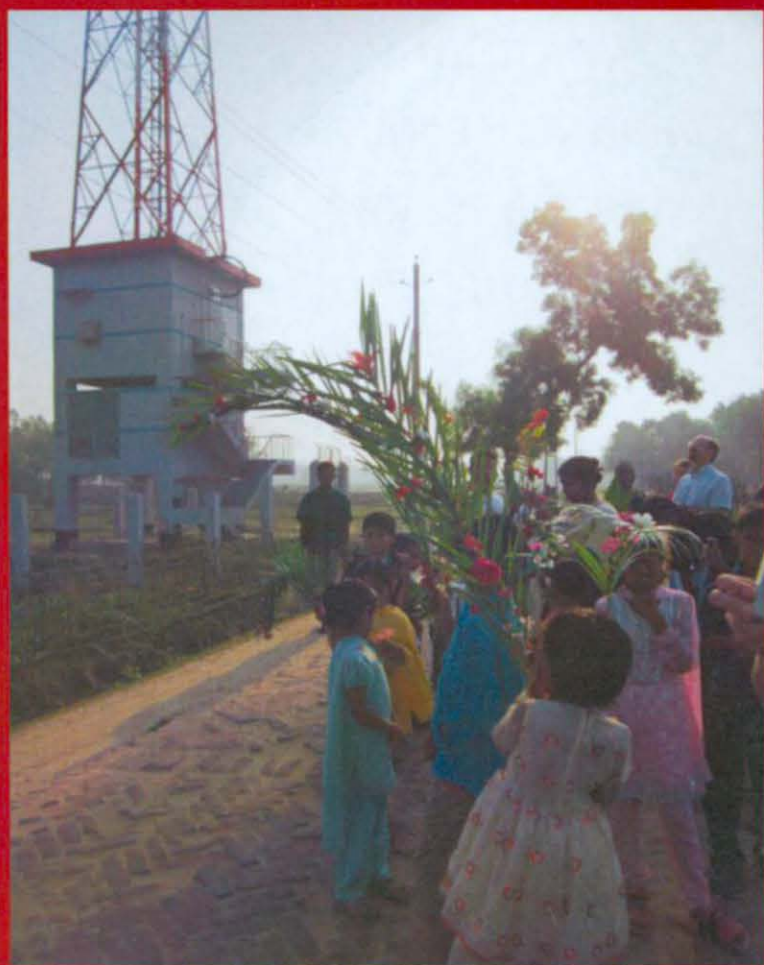
reminds God of me. While I know it probably does not smell as good as the fragrance after the rain, I certainly hope it does not smell like Bangladesh!

Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Ephesians 5:1-2

Lessons Learned:

I guess it's cross-cultural that some Christians only show up on Christmas and Easter. We might have been 30 minutes late, and had to sit outside, but still the people just kept coming!



Sometimes things that look like Palm branches have thorns on them. Also, Easter sunrise services are very, very early.

Lessons Learned:



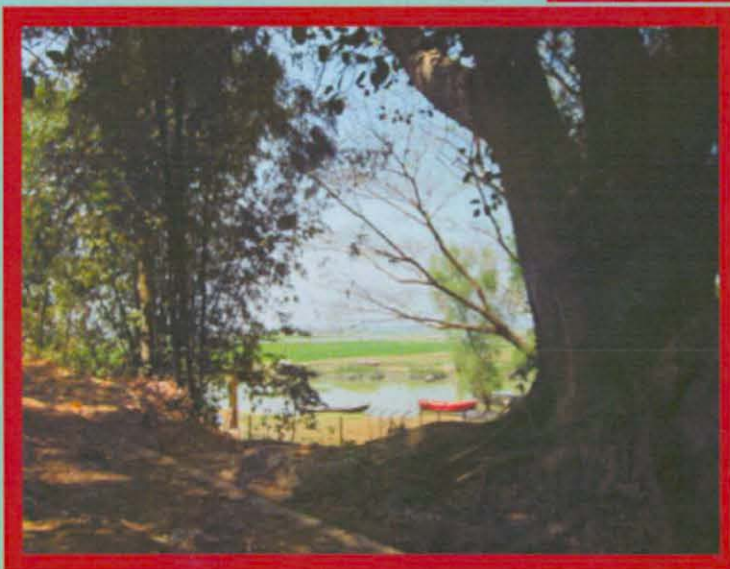
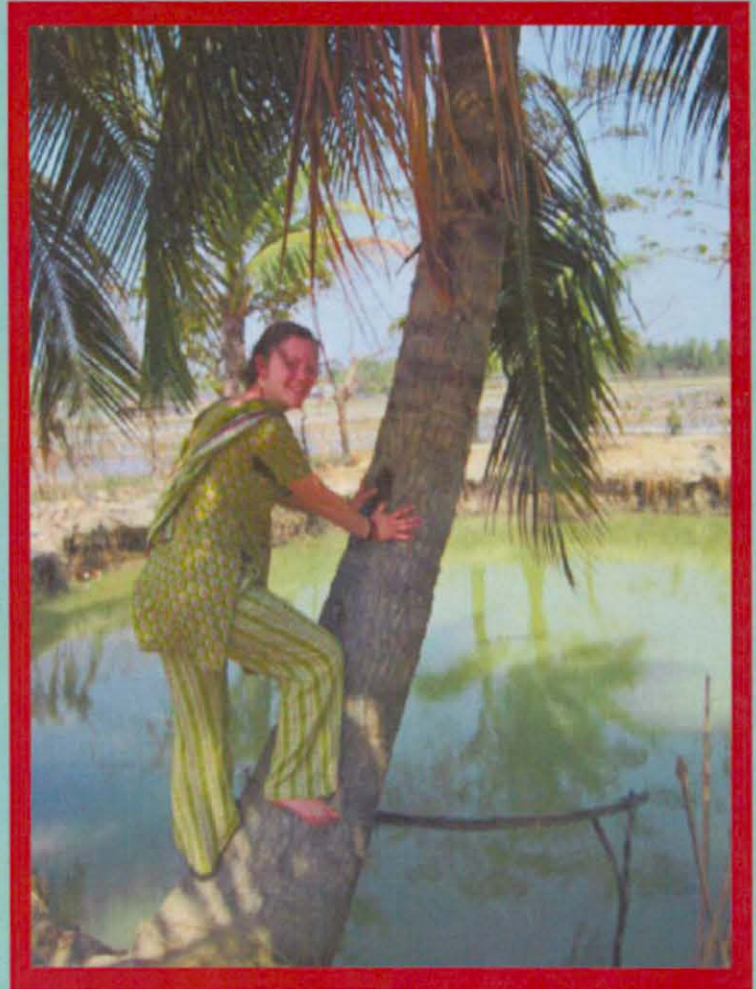
Jumping pictures make any experience look more epic.



Except when it doesn't work...

Lessons Learned:

It is possible to climb a tree to get a better view, only to realize that there are now a bunch of branches in your way.



Some trees look like they were meant to be climbed. Some are ant-infested.

Lessons Learned:



You can never have too much color!

Kids

“Joy-Di look at this lizard Emma found!” “Joy-Di look, I’m riding my bike.” “Joy-Di look, I found a bug.” “Joy-Di wook at my doll.” In Bangla, the national language of Bangladesh, *Didi* means “older sister.” The kids called me Joy-Di, which is literally equivalent to “older sister Joy.” In our culture, it is more like saying “Miss Joy.” Each morning in Bangladesh, I was greeted by a similar chorus from the four Long children, Quinton, Emma, Jack, and Addy. I remember the first time that they caught one of Bangladesh’s friendly little lizards, a tik-tikki. It was an exciting morning in the Long house! Then I remember when they caught their 10th tik-tikki, followed by the 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, etc. While catching tik-tikkis became a common occurrence, the kids still got excited about it, whether it was tik-tikki 12 or 72. They never lost that sense of wonder and excitement.

On school days, Quinton and Emma (then seven and five), went with their mom to the school building, while I stayed home with Jack and Addy (then four and two). What did Jack and Addy and I do? We played. Games like hide-and-go-seek, puzzles, art work, reading stories, swinging at the swing set, running in the rain, and sliding down a massive mound of sand, or simply seeing just how deep we could dig a hole. Many days, we went on adventure walks or treasure hunts. We filled small boxes with “treasures” such as leaves, sticks, and stones. Other times, we just went walking among the trees to find neat leaves. Jack might pick up a leaf and say something like, “Ooh, this one is so pretty. I am going to give it to Mommy,” or “Ooh, this one is so big. I am going to give it to daddy.” The leaves might be dried and

cracked, or they may have looked like the other hundreds of leaves, but to Jack, each was unique and special.

Their sense of wonder was not limited to things in nature. Twice a week, in the afternoon, I taught a Bible lesson to Quinton, Emma, and Jack. As we journeyed through the story of Moses, Quinton, Emma, and Jack, who had never heard some of these stories, or perhaps had only heard them once before, soaked up the stories. At dinner the same evening that we learned about the plagues, we had red kool-aid to drink. One of the kids asked, "What is that?" to which Quinton promptly replied, "Maybe it's blood." I guess he was listening at Bible that day.

In *The Ragamuffin Gospel*, Brennan Manning notes, "Jesus' preference for little people and partiality toward ragamuffins is an irrefutable fact of the gospel narrative."⁵ The more time I spent with the kids, the more I thought, "No wonder Jesus used children to illustrate how our faith should look." Kids certainly are not angelic figures. I could tell stories about some "not-so-great" moments of Quinton, Emma, Jack, and Addy. But for the most part, they are very content, happy children who enjoy life each day. They are curious as well. It would be impossible to count how many questions I answered each day. "Why is she wearing that?" "Why does he look sad?" "How do you say 'eat' in Bangla?" "Why can't we do this?" The list could continue.

I think about my relationship with Christ. I certainly ask a lot of questions, "Why did you let this happen, God?" "What should I do?" "Where should I go?" I certainly have some "not-

⁵ Brennan Manning, *The Ragamuffin Gospel*, (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Publishers, 2005), 52.

so-great" moments and days. But have I retained a sense of wonder? Do I stop and see what the Lord has done and think, "Wow. God, you are incredible." Sometimes we hear particular Bible stories or themes so many times that we become desensitized to the extraordinary.

Mark Buchanan, author of *The Rest of God*, writes that "Adulthood is mostly about getting things done."⁶ We have to-do lists with ever increasing undertakings. We are immersed by the amount of tasks that we feel we must accomplish. Of course, I am not advocating that we simply shirk all of our responsibilities. However, I am suggesting that we take the time to rediscover wonder. Buchanan argues that rediscovering wonder and childlike faith is intertwined with play. He notes that "Maybe all the other virtues of childhood—trust, humility, simplicity, innocence, wonder—are not separate from a life of playfulness, but the fruit of it."⁷ Today, take a moment to play a game, to laugh at a funny sign, to turn up the radio when your favorite song comes on and sing along as loudly as you can. And take a moment to look at something simple, even as simple as a leaf, and note how intricately designed it is. Then look up and around and realize just how many other intricately designed leaves there are. Take the view of a child and stand in wonder. Childlike faith is not blind faith. It is vibrant and exciting.

Rejoice in the Lord and be glad, you righteous;

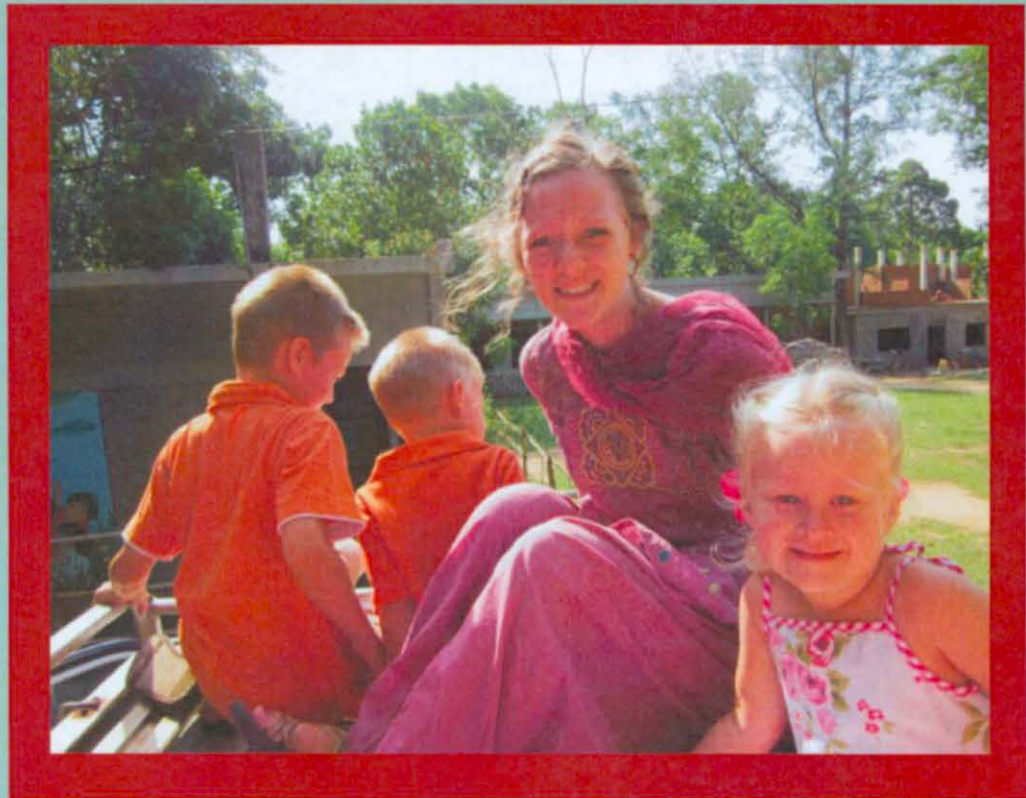
sing all you who are upright in heart!

Psalm 32:11

⁶ Mark Buchanan, *The Rest of God* (Nashville: W Publishing Group, 2006), 143.

⁷ *Ibid.*

Lessons Learned:



Riding on the roof of a van with four kids ages seven and under is a legitimate suggestion.

Lessons Learned:



Sometimes,
ruining a pair of
shorts, or a dress, or
the hem of your pants
is absolutely worth it.



Lessons Learned:



Traveling across the world with people you hardly know brings you very close together.

Hospitality

Sunday morning church in Bangladesh typically ends at 10:00a.m., just in time for the morning tea break. Seizing this opportunity, the Bengali believers often spend the gap between the end of church and the beginning of lunch in each other's homes, catching up on family reports and the latest village news.

One Sunday morning, I decided to tag along with a friend of mine on a tea time visit to the home of one of her English students. I did not know the student, but the Bengali are incredibly hospitable, and many view having a foreigner, *bideshi*, visit their home as a prestigious honor. I think that in my whole time in Bangladesh I was only technically invited to one or two homes. Mostly, I just joined others on their visits. We began our journey to visit the English student, Shukulmar. We traveled to a nearby village where we were certain he lived and asked around until we found Shukulmar's house. Upon arriving at Shukulmar's house, we quickly realized that this was not the right place. It was the home of a Shukulmar, but he was a medic at the hospital, not an English student. In fact, he was on duty at the hospital while we were at his home. His family welcomed us, not letting us leave without a cup of tea and light snacks.

Upon our departure from our new found friends, we received directions to visit yet another village, just a little further down the road, where the English student, Shuklumar lived. We arrived at Shukulmar number two's home, and my teacher friend, turned and looked at us, saying, "he's not the right one." Shukulmar two and his family were quite surprised by the visit

from his teacher and her friends. Yet, again we were not allowed to leave without a proper cup of tea and snacks. We had a nice visit with more new friends.

The irony of it all? The student we were actually supposed to visit is named Shimul. He lived literally a stone's throw away from the church, the starting point of our trek. Needless to say, our visit to his home was rescheduled for the next weekend.

It seems to me that people often return from mission trips overflowing with stories of exceptional hospitality demonstrated by people who have so little to give. They tell these stories because they are true. Once when visiting a home, we calculated that the meal set before us must have cost about the equivalent of 3 months of pay. Another day, a different teacher friend and I were supposed to eat lunch with one of her students. We knew the student's name this time, but unfortunately the student had to cancel at the last minute. A Bengali friend who was with us insisted that we travel instead to her sister's house. On the way, we ran into one of the family members who had been hurriedly sent to the market to purchase the chicken (live, of course) and a few other items they felt we would enjoy.

Each time I showed up at a home, even if they had no idea I was coming, there was never stressing or complaining. No rushing around ensuring that the house was spotless, or stress over the details, or "I just don't have time for this today." Just come in, sit down, have some tea or water and wait while we prepare this for you. It is humbling to be served and sacrificed for in this way. For the Bengalis, having you in their home lets them share their life with you. Suddenly, because you have seen where and how they live, you discover that you

have stumbled upon a sort of common ground, even if it is as simple as, “I live in a house, you live in a house. I eat food, you eat food.”

Paul begins Romans 12 talking about how our lives as Christians ought to look. Many of us are familiar with the opening verses that state: “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...”. As Paul continues, he provides examples of pieces of this transformation. He talks about loving each other, and as a part of that love, he commands the believers to “practice hospitality” (vs. 13). Similarly, Peter writes to believers about love and draws the same conclusion as Paul. Hospitality stems from loving each other as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Newspaper columnist Erma Bombeck once penned an article entitled, “If I Had My Life to Live Over Again.” In the first item on her list, she notes: “I would have invited friends over to dinner even if the carpet was stained and the sofa faded.”⁸ Bombeck has the right idea. We need to stop making excuses and practice the hospitality to which we are called. When we share our homes, our food, our “stuff,” inevitably we share little pieces of our life. Bangladesh is a nation plagued with many issues of government, population, and religion, but hospitality is something they truly understand.

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.

1 Peter 4: 8-9

⁸ Brennan Manning, *The Ragamuffin Gospel*, (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Publishers, 2005), 99.

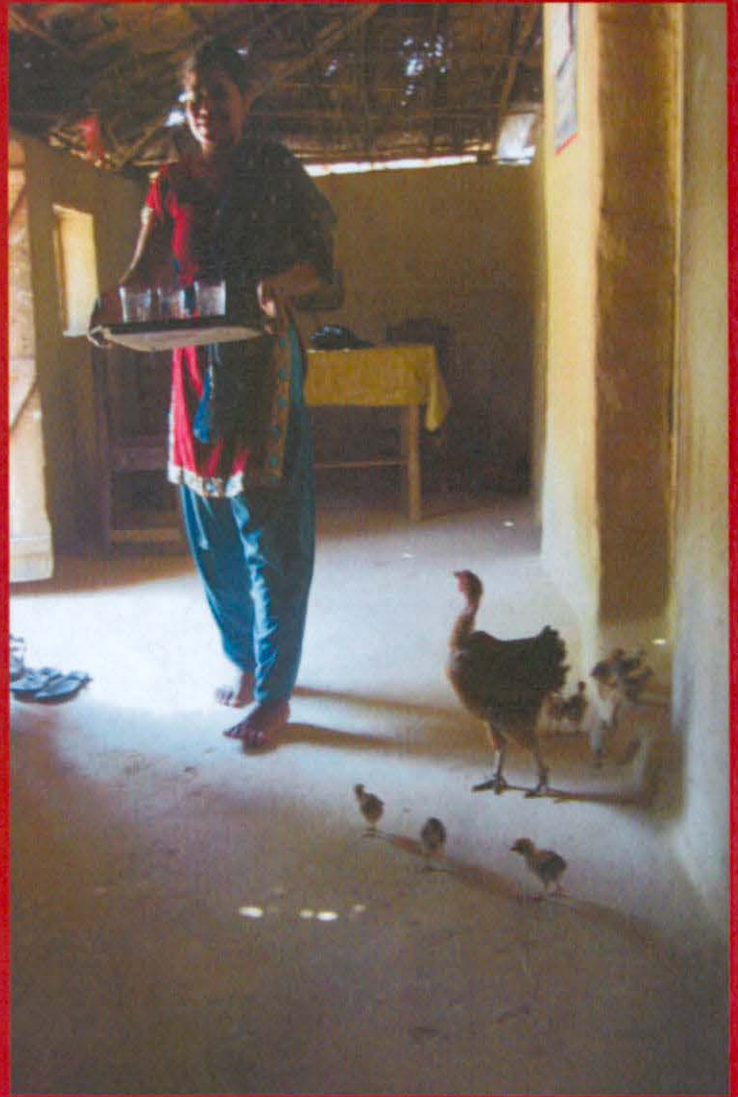
Lessons Learned:



Your food can be looking at you
and still taste good.

Lessons Learned:

When you visit someone's home, your lunch may still be walking when you arrive.



Lessons Learned:



It's never too hot to
drink Bangla Cha!

Time

Sweat ran down my back in the heat and humidity of the Bengali summer as I waited in the church courtyard under the shade of a large tree. The wedding festivities would begin soon, or so we hoped. The wedding, scheduled to start at noon, was running on what we referred to as “Bengali time,” meaning it would start around 2:00p.m. instead. Quieting my growling stomach, I thought of another wedding happening many miles away the same day. Millions of people around the world watched as England’s Prince William wed Kate Middleton in a flawless, precisely timed ceremony within the pristine walls of Westminster Abbey. I smiled to myself as I took my seat on the wooden bench under the nearest ceiling fan. The cement floors were contrasted by the vivid reds and yellows worn by the bride, adorned with gold jewelry. I had certainly stepped into another world.

In the Western hemisphere, particularly America, bombarded with our iPhones, laptops and endless technology, it is easy to forget that often the rest of the world lives quite differently than we do. “Google” cannot be used as a verb in every country. In Bangladesh, where power outages are frequent and those who have internet are blessed with a slow connection, quickly “googling” the lyrics to the one line of that song is suddenly quite a task.

Life moves at a slower pace.

While waiting two hours for a wedding to start can be incredibly frustrating, perhaps there is a lesson to be learned. Take a look at the daily schedule of a typical Bengali, namely one who worked at the hospital compound where I lived.

8:00a.m. arrive for work
10:00a.m. break for tea
12:00-2:00p.m. break for lunch/rest time
2:00p.m. resume work
4:00p.m. break for tea
5:00-6:00p.m. finish work for the day
8:00-9:00p.m. dinner

Rest is built into the daily routine of life. As Christians, we strive to run the race that Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians 9:24 at a full-fledged sprint, when we ought to be treating it more like a marathon. Now I am certainly not saying that we are to be passive in our faith. I am only suggesting that sometimes we fill our faith with activities, when really God is longing for us to come and sit in his presence. I long for the restfulness of spirit that I enjoyed while in Bangladesh. A stone bench overlooked the *khal*, the water meandering steadily among the rice fields and eventually spilling into the Bay of Bengal. I treasured each moment of peace and rest, knowing that once I returned to the U.S., peace like this would be more difficult to attain. I was right. Upon my return, I discovered myself swimming in the choppy sea of schoolwork, a summer job, and myriad other “real-life” issues.

Here in my “normal” life, I find that I have to markedly decide to have rest, to spend time, like Mary, at the feet of Jesus (Luke 10:38-42). Drowning out the noise of busyness, or insecurity, or technology, or perhaps all three, is no small feat. Sometimes we find that what causes our busyness is not bad. It can even stem from service projects. Cynthia Heald, a renowned Christian author writes, “I came to understand that much of my yearning to serve

rose out of a desire to prove to God that I loved Him and that I was worthy of His love."⁹ We know that this is not right, but do we really believe it? Do I believe that God's grace is truly big enough to accept me completely as I am? We must try to find rest in the simple truth that when God says His grace abounds, He means it.

When I choose to spend time in rest with God, He provides it. Heald continues, "The key to knowing what I should be doing is my being yoked to Christ. It is walking daily with Him that I can hear His voice...Prayerful waiting on God can only occur when I am abiding and concentrating on Him."

Life will always be busy. We should view our time with God not as another item on the to-do list, but as a welcome opportunity for respite in the face of a frenzied world.

"Come to me, all you who are 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. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Matthew 11:28-30

⁹ Heald Cynthia, *Becoming a Woman of Simplicity* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2009), 30.

Lessons Learned:



Dallas traffic is really nothing to complain about.

Lessons Learned:



There is always room for one more!

Lessons Learned:



Some people just look like
they have a story to tell.

Still 5'2"

The Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Safari Park resides just a few miles down the road from Malumghat, the small village where I lived in Bangladesh. When I first heard "Safari Park," my mind immediately pictured visions of riding in a jeep across rugged terrain amongst the elephants and giraffes (which I realize are not native to Bangladesh). The Safari Park, however, is more closely akin to a run-down zoo. It is just animals in cages, aside from the few monkeys taking a nap outside of a cage. The Safari Park charges foreigners nearly twice the price of admission that it charges Bengali nationals. Once you have arrived at the Safari Park, and have taken all of this in, you also realize that you are more on display than the animals. Mothers and fathers lean down to their children and point, saying, "bideshi, bideshi," which means foreigner. The cell phone cameras are quickly accessed, and you find yourself being videotaped walking. One of my first thoughts was, "Why are you videotaping me walk? I have two legs just like you that I am using to walk. My skin is white, and yours is brown, but we are not as different as you think."

We do this too, in our own way. Much as I imagined an adventurously wild Safari Park, our mind's eye paints a vivid scene in which the missionary stands outside primitive huts, Bible in hand, while the "uncivilized" natives gather around, eager to hear the words of this strange white man. While I am sure that scenes like this have occurred, it certainly was not the regular occasion during my time in Bangladesh. We romanticize the lives of missionaries, of Christian leaders or authors, our friends, and sometimes even our own lives.

Whenever I am going to a new place, I imagine what I will be like in that situation. Sometimes I picture this heroic person sweeping in with an ever cheerful countenance accompanied by a wonderful smile, and always slightly taller than I actually am. But then, I get there, and I realize that life is still life. I still have to brush my teeth, I still do not like mornings, I still have bad days and good days, and I am still 5'2." I am always amazed by how "normal" I still feel.

Amy Carmichael once penned, "Don't imagine that by crossing the sea and landing on a foreign shore and learning a foreign lingo you 'burst the bonds of outer sin and hatch yourself a cherubim."¹⁰ Before we put missionaries or Christian leaders on pedestals, it is important to remember that the men and women that we peg as heroes of faith have their own weaknesses too. Pride, jealousy, insecurity, no one is immune. We imagine these great men and women of faith dramatically entering to save the day, but really they are normal people. They walk with two legs, just like you and I.

I am thankful that we do not have to be heroes. We do not have to save the day. God has already taken care of that. He calls us to be faithful, to live life wherever He places us. Denver Moore, the co-author of *Same Kind of Different as Me*, explains it this way: "But I found out everybody's different—the same kind of different as me. We're all just regular folks walkin' down the road God done set in front of us."¹¹ Maybe I will never be taller than 5'2," but I can

¹⁰Elisabeth Elliot, *The Life and Legacy of Amy Carmichael: A Chance to Die* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House Company, 1987), 79.

¹¹Ron Hall, Denver Moore, and Lynn Vincent, *Same Kind of Different as Me* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 235.

rest assured that wherever He places me, He who began a good work in me will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus (Phil. 1: 6).

Lessons Learned:

Even Buddha gets tired of sitting Indian style.



He needs a break sometimes.

Hence the enormous "Reclining Buddha" in Thailand.

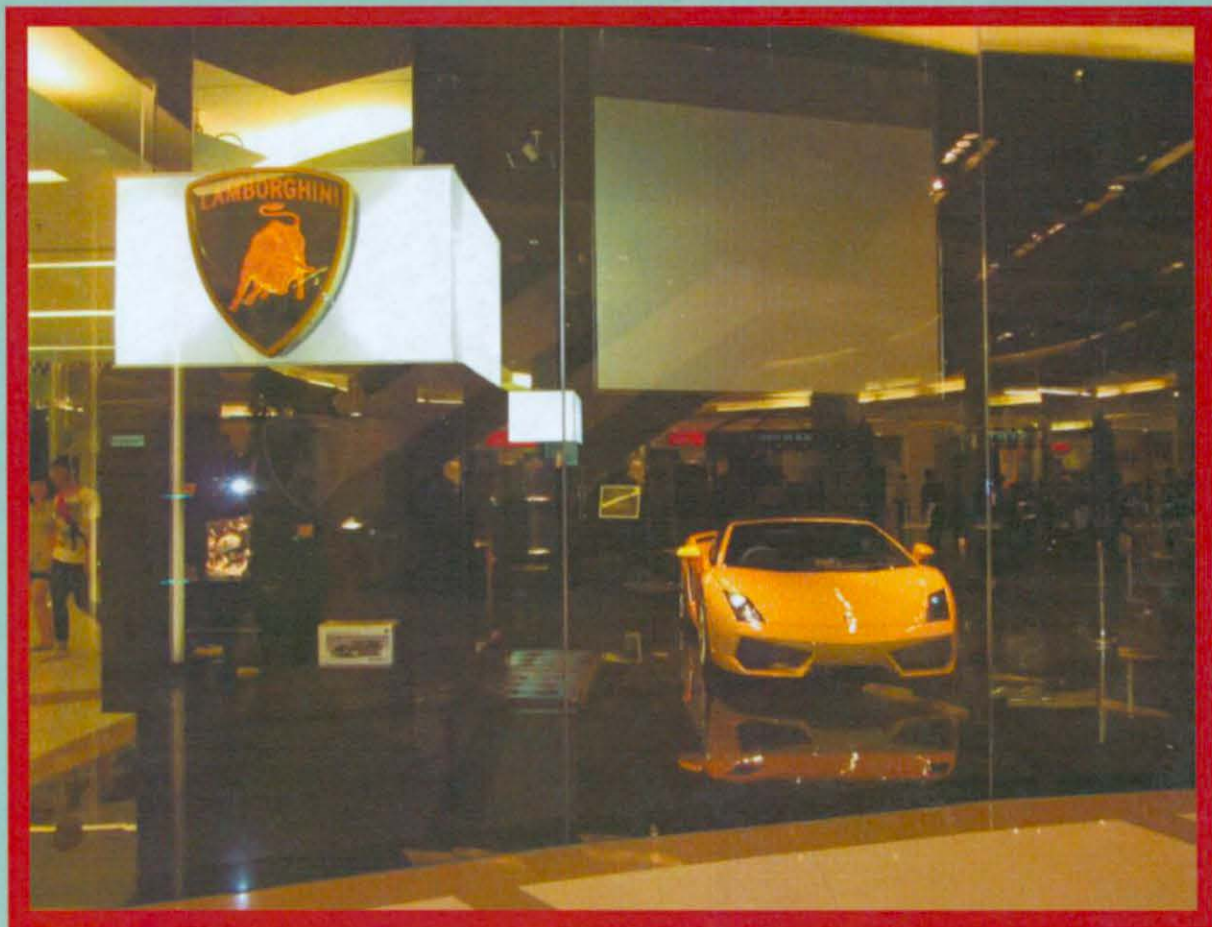


Lessons Learned:



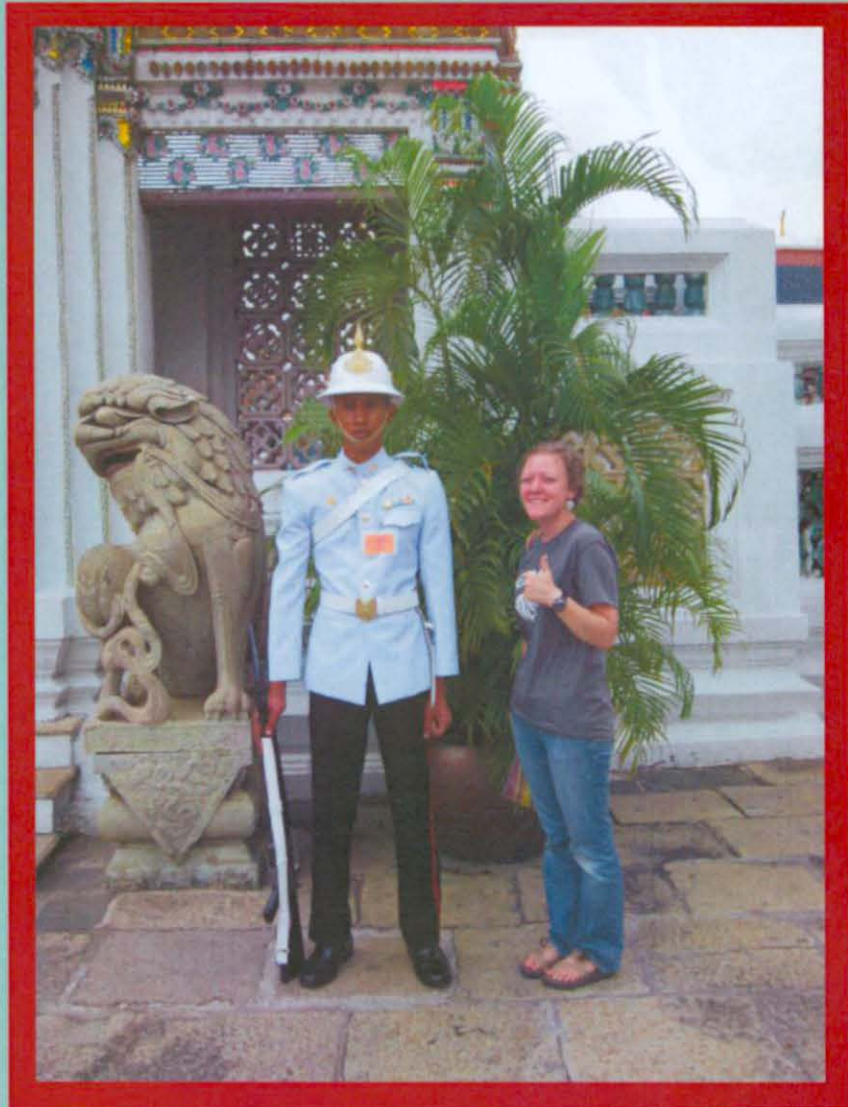
Sometimes ads don't really make sense, they just need words that fit in size gazillion font.

Lessons Learned:



Some malls have whole floors for luxury cars. And they're on the 4th floor. How does this happen?
I don't know, probably magic.

Lessons Learned:



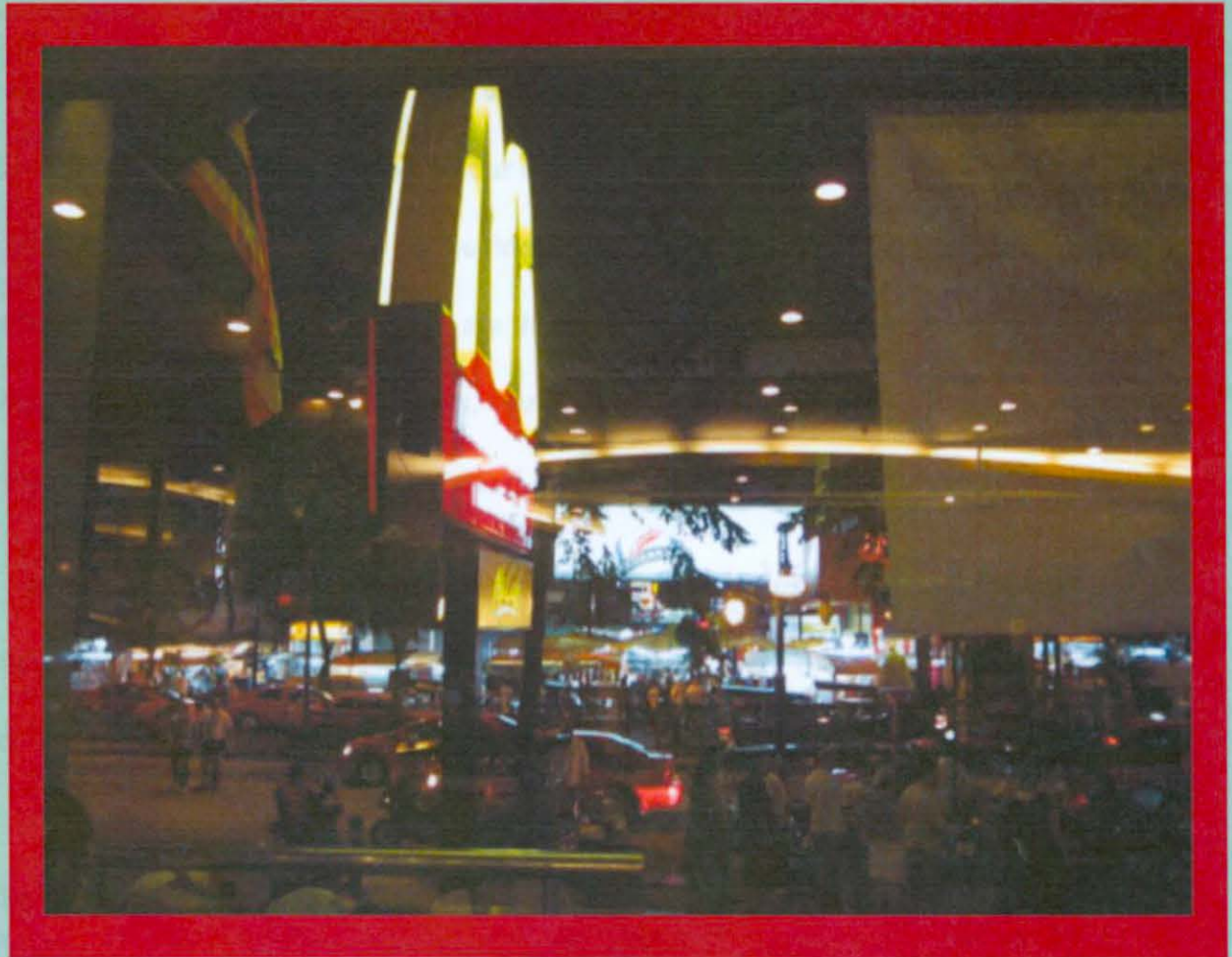
Cheesy tourist pictures with a palace guard are required.

Lessons Learned:



Texas is a big deal, but I knew that one beforehand.

Lessons Learned:



McDonald's tastes way better when you're on the other side of the world.

Dirty Feet

Taking off my sandals as I stooped to enter the low door frame of the Bengali home, I noticed my feet stained yellow and brown, dirt etched into the hard-earned calluses. Across the well-swept dirt floor, our hostess led us to a wooden bed frame covered by a thin, worn mattress, the finest seat in her home. We waited there as the family, including in-laws, and occasionally a neighbor or two, prepared our meal. The food ready, we moved to the table, or more often a mat spread out for us on the floor. The family served our meal, and only after we had eaten at least two heaping helpings, ate their own meal. I was humbled by their service. With no microwaves, ready ground spices, frozen chicken breast, or even cans of vegetables, it takes hours to cook a traditional Bengali meal, not to mention the cost.

In John 13:1-17, the apostle John narrates the story of Jesus washing His disciples' feet. In Bangladesh, touching someone with your foot or showing them the bottom of your feet are both considered highly disrespectful cultural taboos. After walking a few miles down dusty dirt roads, and observing my own feet, I can understand the reasoning. When we think about Jesus washing the disciples' feet, we picture something akin to a commercial for a kitchen cleaning product. Just run this sponge across your greasy countertop layered with grime, erasing the stains with one simple stroke of the hand. The problem is, typically this does not work as well as in the commercial. Similarly, the dirt did not just slide right off of the disciples' feet. We are not talking about a light layer of dust; this was a lot of dirt. Jesus washing your feet would be very humbling indeed.

Oswald Chambers writes, “Ministering as opportunity surrounds us does not mean selecting our surroundings, it means being very selectly God’s in any haphazard surroundings which he engineers for us.” Chambers continues, noting that Jesus does not perform a grandiose task of service as an example to His disciples. Instead, He washes their feet, a typical, every-day sort of task. And he commands us to do the same. “Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you” (John 13:15-16).¹² Service is not something we can only do on the “mission field” or in a homeless shelter or in the inner city. Service is embedded into facets of each of our days. Serving God through what we deem menial and mundane is often more difficult than serving in a foreign land. Maybe it is putting the dishes away or vacuuming the living room rug. Perhaps it is holding the door open for a stranger at the store. These are not just good or nice things that we do, we do them because service ought to be ingrained into who we are as followers of Christ.

In *On Being a Servant of God*, Warren Wiersbe defines service through ministry this way: “Ministry takes place when divine resources meet human needs through loving channels to the glory of God.”¹³ Wiersbe explains that through distributing God’s grace, one of His divine resources, we become loving channels that provide for people, but ultimately bring the glory to God.¹⁴ Service is not always easy, sometimes it is very hard and we would like to quit. Sometimes God moves us to another place. Other times, He calls us to stay through the

¹² Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*, (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1935), 255.

¹³ Warren Wiersbe, *On Being a Servant of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 12.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 16-17.

difficult times and causes us to grow through them.¹⁵ For me, leaving Bangladesh was not a desire of my heart. I desperately wanted to stay and continue helping the Longs and building relationships with the Bengalis. I have never wanted to pause time so badly. God, however, was moving me home to continue serving Him. On May 21, 2011, outfitted in my Bengali garb, I began the long journey back to the United States where I was lovingly greeted and welcomed by family and friends. Bangladesh holds a very special place in my heart and I hope that one day God will lead me back to serve Him there. But until then, my prayer is to serve Him faithfully wherever He places me.

Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a human being, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

Philippians 2:7-8

¹⁵ Ibid., 26.

Monday, May 9, 2011

Sitting on the bench at sunset—one of my favorite things ever.

The tide is in, so the khal is full and the water ripples quietly on by. The wind rustles the leaves softly. Birds are chirping. The low hum of a motor boat as it passes by. Water buffalo grazing. Golden rice fields ready for harvest. Someone singing as they work. Palm trees in the distance, not a cloud in sight. The sun's golden gleam reflects off the water. The sky is hazy, but the sun is so bright. A solitary figure walks in the distant rice fields. A goat bleating. The smell of seafood. A drum beating softly, I can only hear it every once in a while.

As I sit here, Lord, how thankful I am to be here. Shundor des (beautiful country) is right. How I will miss this place. And as the sun sets, I'm thankful that you've let me see another day through. Overwhelmed with gratitude. God, I have no fancy words for you. I wish I could express my heart better, but you know it, and I'm thankful for that too. Love you. Thank you.

Love,
Joy

Lesson Learned:



“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

Colossians 3:15-17

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