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“Doctor, everything I eat makes me sick. What am I supposed to eat if I can’t eat rice and beans?” He wasn’t complaining. It was a sincere question. He hadn’t been able to eat well for days and he doesn’t have the financial ability to switch his diet. The look of earnest hope on his face makes me want to help him. So I turned to the real doctor, Doctor Scott VanLue from Florida, and said, “What can we do for him doc?” He responded, “Don’t worry; he just has a parasite, let me get the medicine.”



(Working with one of the husbands of our clients.)

As part of the ministry of microfinance here in the Dominican Republic, we provide health and health education services for our clients. This particular situation was a 2-day clinic where I was brought on as a translator to work in the rural communities of El Seybo. Since I was the one speaking Spanish to the clients, they naturally thought I was the doctor. Doctor VanLue got a kick out of them calling me doctor, and told me, “Hey, it took me about seven years of schooling before they called me doctor; it only took you scooting your chair a bit closer to the patient. I say run with it.”



(The waiting room of one of our clinics.)

This particular case with the man mentioned above was like many of the 115 patients we saw that day and the 110 the day prior. Most of the patients had significant pain in their stomach and were unable to eat well, or if at all. It was the hardest thing to look into the eyes of a child when he says to you “My tummy hurts.” And he rubs his stomach trying to make it better. Doctor VanLue’s reassurance was comforting, and we were able to give every family that walked through the door the medicine to kill the parasites, and spent time talking with them about proper food preparation and the importance of clean water.

This is a side of microfinance I’m not used to seeing. I spend most of my time working in the communities working with optimistic clients or up and coming entrepreneurs talking with them about their plans for the future, their families, and the Biblical lesson we do during the day. With medical clinics like this, I get to learn more about the families of the people we serve. In another visit, I had to interrupt the woman to say,

“Ma’am I’m going to have to pause you for a second, I need to make sure I remember what you told me to tell the doctor.”

“Oh honey, don’t worry. All seven of them are my children, and I know what’s wrong with them, I’m their mother. If you don’t remember, I will.” She smiles in response to my concern.

She's been a microfinance client for six years. She and her husband run a successful business selling fruit to the local community. He's currently working the double-shift so she can take children to the clinic that we brought into the mountains. I guess I'm taken aback at this situation. Normally, if I would have seen this woman during a microfinance meeting it's all business, smiles, and a few prayer requests, much like a weekly small group Bible Study meeting. But its different now, she's let me in to her life because I'm the doctor for the day. She tells me that two of her daughters may have Sickle Cell Anemia, a red blood cell deficiency that can be deadly later on in life. Doctor VanLue tells me that this is difficult to treat in the States, hopefully they just have Anemia, which is a much less dangerous illness caused by poor nutrition.



(The waiting room in the other clinic.)

My assistant, (the real Doctor VanLue,) is up fetching medicine from our pharmacy. Our driver walks up to me and says that the roads are so muddy here in the mountains that if the rain continues for another 15 minutes we are going to have to leave or we'll be stuck here. I look at him, then at this woman with seven children, and then the 40 people in our waiting room, a small school converted into a clinic. I want the rain to stop. I want to make sure we can see everyone.



(Conversing with the real doctor, Scott VanLue.)

The mom of seven looks at me and knows that my countenance has changed, she asks me what's wrong. I tell her that it's raining and I want it to stop so that we can see everyone who came here. I don't want our team to be in danger trying to leave the mountains. She reassures me, **“Doctor, it's the Lord that brought the clinic to us today, and it's the Lord that'll take you back home.”**

Doctor VanLue returns with the medicine for the seven children, the mom and the dad. I carefully go over the instructions for the nine prescriptions, reaffirm health instructions for preventing parasites, and how to use the shampoo for lice. I ask her if I need to repeat it. She responds, “I'm the mother, remember?” I laugh and we pray a

small prayer for the family. The real Doctor VanLue thanks her for her visit.

It all strikes me at the same time. The two daughters with Anemia. The pounding rain on the roof. The women with their children waiting to see us. The muddy roads getting muddier. The smiles on the Doctor's face and the rest of the family we just visited. The real doctor is thanking the patient for her visit. Wow. I'm amazed and inspired. It's people like Doctor Scott VanLue, and women like the one we just visited that renew my vision for what this world can be, a world where the living God still moves and works where we think it's hopeless.

The rain begins to calm down. I'm smile when I think about what she told me.



(The rain held off and we saw all the patients.)

The Doctor is right. Sometimes it's just the seat you sit in that brings you closer to the work of God. Your location can help you become a doctor, a microfinance practitioner, or just a messenger bringing the good news of God's work abroad.

I pray for the seat you sit in, and that God would scoot you a bit closer to His work where you are right now.

Blessings to you and your family,

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While I'm volunteering down here in the Dominican Republic, I am still finishing the final part of my fundraising through the remainder of the year. Do pray for the work of HOPE and if you feel led to support me financially, you can find that information here.

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