

Hi family and friends, sorry this email about December is coming so late. I think we all get super busy during the holidays and for me I was also preparing to go to San Diego with Edify and then onto Nicaragua where I am now. I hope to send out my January newsletter about what we're trying to do in Nicaragua before January finishes. Blessings, -Aaron

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I had a whirlwind tour of the US during my 11 weeks back home. While I spent four weeks on the road in various parts of the country living out of suitcases, it was still nice to be back in the company of friends and family and to enjoy the cold. I'm still surprised we had a white Christmas back home in Broadway with my family. Our Christmas Eve service was almost cancelled due to weather, but we trudged on and made our way to the celebration on that cold, snowy December night. I'm sure the infant Savior of the world marveled at our arduous commute of 45 seconds (we live across the road.)



(Enjoying the cold for a few months.)



(Time with family at home.)

On Christmas Day I called my Dominican family on Skype. I lived with them in their small home in a ghetto of Santo Domingo for a short bit when I first arrived to the DR, but had visited them every two or three weeks for the two years I spent in the DR. Talking with them on Skype brought back so many memories of my time in Santo Domingo, and though it had only been two months, it felt like a long time since I had been at home with them.

When someone asked me in Richmond where home was now, I tried to modify the common phrase with "Home is where my passport is, and I have no idea where I put it."

In truth, I knew where my passport was, and when I had to pack for Nicaragua it was in the top-most part of my backpack, like always. But for me, the concept of "home" has been an odd one over the past few years. I got used to living out of two backpacks, packing, unpacking, saying hello and goodbye so many times that it became much like the stamps on my passport. Show up, say the usual things, and you'll be able to pass through to the next destination.

It hasn't bothered me though. When I made the decision three years ago to serve overseas, I knew that I was changing some things that would remain permanent. Having a stable "home" would be a temporary enjoyment and a future plan. What became home to me was a mission, and that's where I put my focus.

I have kept a journal for 11 years, and much of what I wrote three years ago, consisted of trying to live into the "large arc"



of my life story. That is, what did I want my life to be about when it was all said and done. Some things on that list were:

- To do something that was more about others than it is about me.
- To put my faith in Jesus into action.
- To dedicate myself to something I believed in.



(Snow at the local church.)



(Edify team members with Luis Sena of Esperanza.)

I've written many times about my belief in the efficacy and strength of what we do in Edify, and what HOPE International does around the world. We have been helping people develop skills to provide more employment opportunities and income for their families, providing them the financial capital to get started, and sharing the hope of a loving God who believed that to redeem the brokenness of this world was worth sending his beloved Son to this earth. (I think it's always important to point back to the real meaning of the holidays you know?)

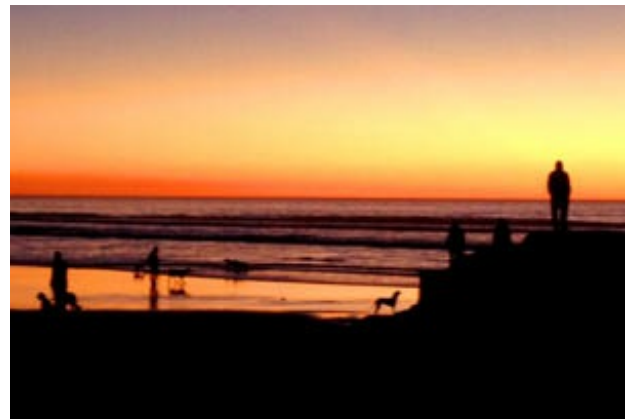
More than ever I believe in this kind of economic development. Microfinance is a good thing, and it works.

I knew that the time I was in the States, I would be there temporarily, and in fact, I awaited the day where I could get back "home" – that is, where the mission is, to do good in the places that desperately need it. So when I arrived to the Edify training in San Diego, CA I knew that I was a few more steps closer to home. Seeing my good friends from the Dominican Republic, and the executive leadership that I have come to know over the past few years, was like walking back through a familiar door. These are the people I shared the mission with, and those that I will continue working with this upcoming year.

A teammate asked me if I was worried about Nicaragua, and I said that as long as I had a clean, quiet place to sleep, I'd be fine. "That's it?" They asked.

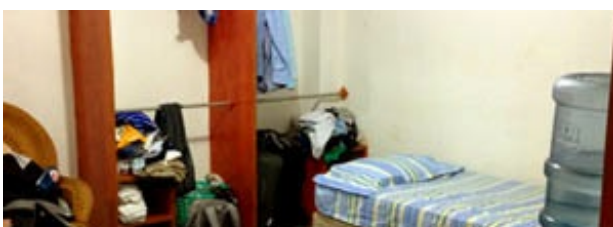
"Yeah, that's usually it." I responded.

Maybe now, I've developed the game plan for this kind of life. By no means am I perfect, but I've realized that as soon as I handle the few, crucial details I can focus on the bigger picture. And for me, this is working with Edify to see if we should enter Nicaragua, Honduras, and Peru and help to improve education for children in low economic areas, share the Gospel, and build more bridges out of poverty and into hope like we've been doing in Ghana, Rwanda and the Dominican Republic.



(San Diego reminded me of my "home" in the DR.)

Upon arriving into Nicaragua, I was a bit overwhelmed. New culture, new city, new Spanish slang, and a new set of rules. When faced with so much stimuli it can be a bit shocking. I knew I had to keep it cool, because that's on page one of the playbook. When we arrived to the house in Managua, Nicaragua my host family showed me the room where



I'd be staying. It's separated from the house, has its own bathroom, and is clean.

Even though I'd never been here before, I had the sense that since this is part of the mission, and since this fits with the large story of my life, I knew that I was correct in saying:



(A clean, quiet room. Feels like home.)

“Feels like home.”

Then Jesus said to his disciples: “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or

reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest? (Luke 12:22-26 NIV)

I pray that you are finding your way back to the home you are being called to.

Blessings,

-Aaron

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