

Update 28 – written Feb. 12, 2014

Revolution: I don't know how much news you are getting on what is going on here. Here where I am life goes on as usual. Any footage they show you on TV is happening many hours away from where I live. While there are no visible signs locally, the protest that is going on up in Kiev – now some 80 days - is definitely on everyone's mind.

The reason for the upheaval is that the common man is sick & tired of laws that are not enforced with equality. They had hoped that when Ukraine joined the European Union that the EU would rid Ukraine of corruption and promote rights for the common citizen. Those who benefit under the current system, however, are not interested in changing it.

As our own Civil War did, the conflict divides the country, friends, families and even churches. I would ask for your continued prayers. My own prayer is that God would use this situation to draw Ukraine to Himself; and, that there be no further bloodshed. May God's will be done.

New Years & Christmas: I had a busy week planned the 1st through the 7th because I wanted to try and be a part of as many events as I could. As it was though, I missed nearly everything because I was sick with a sinus infection. Bummer on one hand but a blessing on the other. Bummer because I didn't get to be with friends at some special events; but, God used those 8 days of isolation to speak into my life. Some needed course correction took place and I am the better for it.

On the 9th, I was feeling good enough to pop out to the Premorski Church to watch their outreach to the village kids. Over 80 kids came! I was amazed and pleased. The Premorski & Feodosia youth groups came together to put on the outreach program. 2 Kings (the 3rd unfortunately was sick), a shepherd and Mary & Joseph all came to visit so as to help us understand the true meaning of Christmas. Well done everyone!!

Company: A friend of mine uses her amazing sewing skills to bless others. For me, making clothing would equal climbing Mt Everest but for her it is relaxing. Vika has made several dresses for me over the years and we were watching for the opportunity to get together for such a project again. The window opened up and she took her first vacation. Sounds strange to say vacation but that is what she called it.

Vika had never been to Crimea (5 hrs south of Berdansk). However, what she saw through the bus window was about the extent of her sightseeing. During the week, I did all the shopping, cooking and cleaning while Vika threw herself into pulling 4 dresses out of yards of material I had brought from the states. She did a fantastic job. What would have been exasperating for me was exhilarating to her. Somehow at the end of the week we both came away thinking we got the

better end of the deal!

Shannon came a few days later to spend the night. As a single American missionary who lives 2 hours away, I consider her friendship a gift. However, due to different furlough schedules and types of ministries, we hadn't seen each other for some time. It was fun to curl up and catch up. Not everyone would offer to help (especially knowing that I'd probably take her up on it) but that is who Shannon is. Setting her own schedule aside, she blessed me the next morning by working out at the clinic with me for a couple hours.

Perhaps because I am single, that I take extra notice of the Body of Christ. In a family, each member has a role but when you are alone you end up needing to fill many of the roles yourself. Therefore, when someone else comes alongside to love & serve there is a sweet blessing of fellowship, practical help and a kind of happy boost along the way. Vika & Shannon thank you!!

You belong to the power which you choose to obey.

JB Phillips

Sudak: We had planned this meeting a month ago. Pastor Dima had a free block of time in his schedule and had agreed to help me with a big project. However, I checked the weather Tuesday morning before clinic and saw that an ice/snow storm was moving in and, if the forecast proved true, our roads would be dangerous for the rest of the week.

With God's help, I was able to put the "What should I do?" question out of my head during clinic. After clinic and presenting a review workshop on ostomy care to the staff, I headed home. I looked at the forecast again and saw that I had about 2 hours left before our area would be encased in ice. "God what should I do? Do I go or not?"

A 4 way conversation was clamoring on in my head...

Fear – With my weak leg, I stumble on dry ground. Trying to walk or drive on ice is foolish to me. "What if...? What if...! What if...?! What if...? What if....! What if...?!"

I want! - I know my I. I'd like to be able to say it is dead but my I is very much alive and likes to get its way. This time was long awaited, everything was ready and I really wanted to go.

Responsibility - If something bad happens then my actions will involve others. Is this responsible?

Peace – Who quietly said "Go."

A couple phone calls to key people congrued with peace. So some fast foot work had me on the road and headed to Sudak 25 minutes later. We arrived just fine

and my driver returned safely as the roads were getting slick. Thank you Lord! I ended up having a fantastic week. I got what I needed to done and had fun spending time with my friends.

A young missionary recruit asked a veteran Christian,
“What equipment do I need if I am going to serve the Lord, sir?”
The old saint quickly replied, “Bent knees, wet eyes, and a broken heart!”
Unknown

Back to the clinic: I wrote about them back in March, perhaps you remember... Anton - We've been seeing him for about 4 months. His wounds had responded well to treatment and he and his mom were very compliant with our instructions. Over time I began noticing how Pastor Misha had taken a special interest in them. He'd pull them aside to talk. He'd put off lunch so as to be able to sit together and talk with them longer. Something good was going on. He was the last patient of the day so with no line pressing us, I asked Anton to tell me the story again. “Tell me again how you got these wounds.”

‘About a year ago my leg blew up. It was as big as an elephant’s leg – red and swollen and leaking water. It was when I was shooting drugs into my groin. I went to the hospital and the doctor said, ‘We don’t take care of people like you. (Anton has AIDs and TB as a result of his addiction.) He told me to go to a Babka (spirit healer). I went there. She gave me some homemade ointment to rub on my leg. It helped but not much. I couldn't go anywhere. My leg was wet from the knee down all the time. Then I came to you.

“Anton, have you stopped shooting?” “Yes” he said smiling, “I stopped a year ago when this all happened. I go in for methadone treatments now. They are always lowering my dose. I want to get clean. Pastor Misha said he would help me get into a Christian Rehab Center.” I smiled back and said, ‘Wow, Pastor Misha doesn't offer that to very many people. He must see something special in you.’ “I really want to Kristina. I really want to go. As soon as these wounds on my leg heal I want to go.”

Unfortunately this conversation took place over a year ago. When his wounds healed we no longer saw him. Pastor Misha has called but there were no invitations to come and visit. Anton has Pastor Misha’s phone number should he one day change his mind. It seems to me that for both he and his mom fear of the unknown (getting off of methadone, making life changes), hold them trapped.

Sergi – His lower leg wound was 5 by 6 inches wide and down to the bone. My questions tumbled out – How did it start? How long have you had this? Why didn't you come in much earlier? “It started as a scratch about 3 years ago. I thought it would heal on its own. It didn't really bother me until now.” He grinned up at me with all the confidence of a boy who had just slide into home base. Sure he had a ‘road rash’ but he was here now; put a Band-Aid on it and

all would be fine.

Over the next 6 months we worked and the wound decreased in size. But then came the time when progress stopped. I asked him to get an x-ray to rule out a bone infection but he didn't want to. I asked him to return to increased time with his foot elevated (to decrease the swelling) but he was tired of that. I told him that he could go see a surgeon and ask him to be evaluated for a skin graft, but Sergi saw too many possible problems with that option. I didn't have any more super dressings (only simple ones) and I couldn't tell him exactly why his wound wasn't progressing.

Soon after, he stopped coming. When some dressings that were just perfect for him had arrived, I called him. He promised to come the next clinic day but never did. My guess is that because it no longer hurts, Sergi has decided that he would just live with things the way they were.

Vladimer – An unset-able fractured right hip 3 years ago, led to an edematous leg which resulted in water blisters that got infected. The right leg is one huge circumferential wound; the left leg wound is only slightly smaller. The wounds are large, deep and moderately complicated but that is because no one ever has dealt with the underlying problem – edema. If we get rid of the swelling Vladimer isn't going to be in the pain that he is in; blood flow will increase to the wounds; and the wounds should go on to heal.

Lena – When I first saw her she reminded me of a whipped puppy. Trembling with fear and in so much pain, she covered more than walked into the room. In that first visit, God gave me the wisdom to not even touch her but rather sit back quietly and listen. A rooster had pecked her right leg some 3 years ago. Underlying edema, a stroke, trying for far too long on her own and then suffering under uneducated hands had resulted in the mess that lay under that gauze.

She only had a crumb of trust left and had placed that morsel in the hands of a friend (a lovely believer who is a member of one of the local churches). At Vera's gentle coaxing Lena came to us and what joy it has been to watch her bloom!! Lena asked all her questions; followed through with our instructions and despite the fact that she has to hire a car to come in from a distant village, she has returned on her own each week.

Lena has been the ideal patient; hungry for knowledge, obedient and faithful. This past week she had to wait in the waiting room for over an hour but that didn't bother her. "I would come just to be able to listen to him (Pastor Misha sharing in the waiting room)." Because she is no longer in pain, she no longer needs her cane and her smile has returned. My heart is so happy for her as we see progress each week.

I give a translated version of this to each wound patient:

Every time I see a wound the same 3 questions go through my mind. First, what is the reason for the wound? Second, what does the wound need? Third, what needs to be done to support healing? Understanding the answer to each question guides me in correctly treating the wound.

The reasons for why wounds exist are many. The cause may be burn, arterial, venous stasis, diabetic, trauma, pressure etc.. I can use the most expensive ointment or most modern dressings available but if I do not deal with the cause of the wound, these expensive and modern treatments will not help.

Next I ask, "What does the wound need?" Perhaps I need to stop the bleeding, clean it, remove a foreign body, reduce the swelling or stop an infection. The needs of the wound direct my plan of care.

Finally, I direct my attention to the third question. How can I support the healing process? I do not heal the wound. God heals. However, with God's help and wisdom, I can support the process. For example, I can keep the correct amount of moisture on the wound; collect excess drainage; minimize risk of infection and prevent trauma.

Reason? Need? How to support? - I ask myself these same 3 questions every time I see you and examine your Wound. There is a space in your soul that you have tried to fill with different things. However, money, education, food, politics, religion, material goods or good works won't fill this space. None of these will ever give you true joy, peace and purpose. The truth is that you exist to be in a personal relationship with the one True Living God. That empty place in your heart is meant to be filled by God alone. Only a sincere relationship with God will give you true contentment.

Unhappiness, restlessness, emptiness are symptoms of a heart that has ME in the center. What to do? Today ask God for help. You cannot change yourself as our rebellious nature will always try to keep self as most important in our lives. So in your own words, wherever you are just stop and sincerely ask God for help. Agree with God that in putting yourself first you have done wrong and tell Him you are sorry. Then, in faith, accept the undeserved pardon from hell and the undeserved gift of being called a child of God.

With 'the reason for' understood and first step of 'what to do' done, you now must support growth. A mechanic can find the problem and repair it but your car will still not run if you do not put fuel in the tank. So it is in spiritual life. Daily read your personal instruction book, the Bible, so that your confidence in the one true Living God will grow. Attend a church where teaching and preaching about our Lord Jesus Christ is central. Like a spiritual hospital, the church is a place where all the people have

made many mistakes and still make mistakes but with God's help their heart wounds are healing and they are in training to become like Christ.

It is not by chance that you came to the clinic. God directed you here. He alone provided for the medical supplies. I also am simply an instrument in His hand to help you. I live here for one reason; to share with people that our wrong choices cannot decrease His love and our good choices will not increase His love. God loves you. His love for you is perfect and unchangeable. In His love, God chose to pay the price required for our rebellion. Jesus Christ died for you and I. Three days later He rose again from death and is earnestly seeking a personal relationship with you. Not because He needs it but because He knows it will save you from yourself. Even this difficult situation now He is using to help you understand the un-measurable depth, width and height of His love. The choice is yours. The key to heaven is in your hand. How will you answer His love?

Kristina (my name here)

An update: Anton has returned to the clinic twice since I wrote about him in March. He continues to do well medically and he has become part of the fellowship of Pentecostal believers that meet in Feodosia. It seems that he has taken that first step of faith and we are celebrating!

I saw Sergi at the bus stop over the summer and asked him about his leg. He was as slippery as a fish avoiding any specific details. So with all that non information, I understood that he still had the wound and was willing to deal with it as it was. I invited him to the clinic but he never came.

Despite non compliance on the patient's part, mistakes made by the hired nurse and often not having the ideal dressings on hand, the wounds on both of Vladimir's legs had reduced dramatically in size. He was no longer on pain medication and much more mobile. I had hopes that all the wounds would go on to heal. However, throughout the more than 12 months I had been in that home, Christ was not welcomed. On Christmas Day I received a phone call saying that Vladimer had died.

Because the wounds were healing in a steady fashion, she was making good decisions and we knew traveling to the clinic was no small cost for her, we had given Lena a lot of supplies. Her pensive eyes watched our faces as Tanya removed the compression hose . I hadn't seen her for a month and wondered myself what was under that dressing. We broke into big grins – what a miracle God has done for Lena!!!

What had been some 25 by 15 cm at the start was now 5 by 1 cm. Yes, we had worked on it a year but much more than the wound care has been going on. God has been working in Lena's heart. I'm asking for your prayers for Lena. She has invited me to visit her at home and I know in my heart that God wants me to go. I will go along with her friend Vera (who originally brought her to the clinic) as well

as Sergi, Vera's pastor. Please pray that God will see to all the details; most importantly the details of Lena and her family welcoming Christ into their hearts and home.

Era showed up at clinic 3 weeks ago in tears - tears of no hope, tears of pain and tears of fear. She has been in and out of the hospital for the past 3 months for her leg wounds. As she has so many times before, the lady who sells meat pies in the court yard of the Feodosia hospital told Era about us. We were able to address the underlying issue of edema and her wounds are healing.

Galina showed up this Tuesday with the same tears. 3 months of outpatient treatments and her wounds were getting worse. Her situation has a lot going against her. But, God is for her, she has a wonderful husband and the multiple underlying issues have not all been fully addressed. With God's help, I have hope.

The Lena's, Era's and Galina's don't let a word of mine drop to the floor. What I say has great authority. They look at me with eyes that have put me in a very high place. I grasp the feelings the Apostle Peter may have had when he said to Cornelius, who fell at his feet and worshiped him, "Stand up; I too am just a man." Acts 10:25-26 Pray for me that I never ever stop directing their attention, hope and worship to God alone.

June