

June Johnson (crimeakid@gmail.com) Update 22, written April 25, 2013

If you think you are too small to make a difference, try spending the night in a closed room with a mosquito. _ - African saying

Why the Lord allows us to participate...I don't know. I just know He gives us that privilege to be a part of the work He is doing...so I write to say thank you. Thank you for your prayers!! I asked for your prayers on several fronts in the last update, now this month you get to hear about how God answered.

***Vacation Bible School – approx. 30 boxes of supplies are on their way.** Upper Ukraine got record inches of snow dumped on them in March so I assumed that this is what had held up the humanitarian aid boxes I expected. However, a few days after I sent out the last update I heard otherwise. Apparently there was a new head of customs for all of Ukraine and she had decided to make some major changes. In short, my boxes (as well as every other item coming through customs) were being held at the border.

Knowing full well this was hardly the case, I joked sarcastically with a pastor saying, “I’m sure they are over hauling the system to make it more efficient and cheaper.” In my heart though, the subject was no joke. So many donations & purchased supplies were in those boxes and now they were wrapped in red tape. Red tape I couldn't break through and, even if it was demanded, there was no way I was going to pay a bribe. I felt compelled to ask my national ‘teammates’ to pray alongside me. I spoke with many pastors, Sunday School teachers and VBS leaders asking them to hold this situation before our Almighty problem solver. This was God’s stuff for His kids and only He could release these boxes and get them here in time for summer.

At 9 pm on April 10 I called our contact man, asking if he had heard anything about the boxes. “I just got off the phone; your boxes will arrive tomorrow!” By Friday all 30 boxes were in my garage. Thank you Lord!!! It was fun to send out emails and text messages telling everyone that God had seen to our boxes.

The Israelite soldiers looked at Goliath and saw a massive opponent. _But David looked him up and down, and said, ‘This one I can’t miss!’

-Ukrainian pastor

***I would ask for your prayers for wisdom** (what to do when & how) **and obedience** (not getting stuck on my plan but rather doing all and nothing more than my Father asks). When I wrote this last month I remember wondering how this would ‘look’ – this wisdom & obedience – for the overlapping dates, un-jelled ideas and many unknowns attached to each question. Now in looking back it seems a bit surreal...because each event formed as if on its own.

I didn't go to Zaporoshja. Their boxes were held up as well and with no boxes, we had no supplies with which to see patients. Waiting to see what would happen later in the month wasn't a good option for either of us and yet there was business to take care of so Zoya said that she would come down. I said, “Great!” but then she didn't call back until Wednesday afternoon to tell me she would

be in town to see me the next morning. I'm one to prefer a little more warning but amazingly Thursday was absolutely open. We had a productive few hours together and covered all of our business before I got her back on her bus to make the 8 hr trip back. P.S. Since Zoya's visit their boxes have also arrived and the 2 ostomy nurses I've trained will go ahead and see patients without me. God had seen to Zaporoshja.

When I called Berdansk to ask about coming up it turns out they had more in mind than my seeing a few patients. "We would like to have an evangelistic outreach to all of our ostomy patients and want you to be the main speaker." Honestly that caught me off guard but after praying about it I realized that God had opened a door that I needed to walk through. So this past Thursday I (and a very full car of medical supplies) made the trip up.

The day I arrived in Berdansk they received their delayed shipment of boxes so they were praising God too! Era (the wound & ostomy nurse I have trained at this church clinic) and I spent Friday sorting these new boxes and preparing for the outreach.

On Saturday, 26 people who have an ostomy or who have a family member at home with one came to the Berdansk Church. I shared my testimony (which I have attached with this update) and then led a mini workshop. Pastor Sergi wrapped up the 2 hours touching on the meaning of suffering and how often it is a tool used by God to get our attention to the most important – our relationship with Him. Those who wanted to be seen waited for a consult with me afterwards. It was rather a blur but I think I saw about 10 or 12 people. Era had personally invited them during the outreach knowing they had tough situations. Man she was right....she defiantly has the most complicated ostomy case load of the 3 church clinics.

As far as I could tell the patients were pleased, Pastor Sergi seemed pleased; I know Era was very pleased...so if all of them were happy so am I. The next morning I caught the 6:15 am bus and headed home. Their boxes had come, an outreach happened and patients had been seen. God had seen to Berdansk.

***sort the VBS supplies** With the delay in their arrival, I won't be able to get all this sorted out into 30 VBS's as I had hoped. However, God bless 'um, already 4 gals have said they'd be glad to help upon my return. So, God has seen to the VBS supplies.

***Temporary Residency Permit** The first half of the process had gone pretty smooth but in early April Pastor Nicholi and I hit a bit of rough water when the higher ups decided to make us 'run laps.' It's not just now but rather something I've experienced here again and again over the past 15 years – humility. It's the humility of bowing to a corrupt authority and consenting to the hurdles they make me jump because I will not pay a bribe. And still closer to the heart, it is the humility that another has taken the hit for me. Meaning the harsh words, intense stress, added work directed at me fall on another.

We did what they required and entered into another waiting period. It was crystal clear in my head that during this 5 day period, I would be free to travel so without even thinking that I needed to tell Pastor Nicholi about my plans I headed up to Berdansk (5 hrs from Feodosia). But the day after I

arrived he called telling me I needed to go down to the office and pick up my documents right now. My stomach dropped as I had to say - "Pastor Nicholi, I am in Berdansk." There was a long pause and the situation screamed of irresponsibility on my part. Pastor Nicholi is the most Christ like person I know and he gently moved to plan B.

When I spoke with Era this week she said that several ostomy patients had attended worship service for the first time this past Sunday. In looking back I see God's hand. Had I had the faintest sense of needing to stay in Feodosia, I would have canceled my trip to Berdansk and the outreach would not have happened. God wanted the outreach to happen and had put everything in motion so that it would, including getting the boxes there in time and closing my eyes to the possibility of needing to stay home.

Tuesday at 9:15 am Pastor Nicholi, Tanya (Pastor Misha's wife) and I stood outside the document office all staring at what I held in my hand. I whispered, "I don't believe it." "But," he said, "You are holding it in your hand!" All of us were in shock. At the very least we all expected to have to accomplish one more step and the best possibility would be that we would complete everything on Thursday – 1 day before my current document expired. But instead, here it was only Tuesday, the document office had gone ahead and completed everything and I was holding the necessary paper to be able to stay in Ukraine another year. We had crossed the finish line! God had seen to the temporary residency permit extension.

I am responsible for effort with excellence, not outcome.

Outcomes are all God's business. We are told to feed the poor, heal the sick, bear witness for our Lord, serve faithfully in our churches and do so with excellence. But the only power that accomplishes for the kingdom comes from God. Our job is to seek His presence, seek His will, obey what we can discern and trust Him with the outcomes.

Christian Medical and Dental Association devotional

Days ahead-

Last August, when it was ever so much more pleasant to be inside under the air conditioner, I was working on the computer. My brain was focused on the upcoming retreats that I and my teammate would hold for our sister's active in ministry in October. With so very many of my ideas being pulled from the Missionary Encouragement Trust retreat I had experienced in '09, I 'randomly' decided to look at their site. It was then that I saw that their ministry was coming to an end – sad news. I decided to send them an email to say thank you once more for how they had blessed me and how this blessing was about to be passed on to 100 others through the upcoming retreats.

Not many days passed and I received a reply. "Thank you for your email!"..."It is great to hear how God continues to work..." "Would you consider coming to our final retreat in May?" The theme was 'Cross – centered Care', it would be held in Czech Republic and was for missionaries and local church personal who are currently in the ministry of care giving to missionaries.

God went on to open the door, provided for the opportunity and this is something I've been looking

forward to for several months now. Saturday I will fly to Prague. At the last Christian medical conference for students I met a pastor from Oregon (of all places!) and learned that he and his wife have served in Prague for 20 years. They blessed me by inviting me to stay with them for a few days before the conference, which allows me the chance to explore the area a bit. From their house I will travel to the conference site and be there for a week. The day this conference ends, I fly back to Kiev to drop into another conference.

Unity in ministry-Love in Action is the theme for the All Ukraine Christian Medical Congress and it will be held May 9 – 11th outside of Kiev. I've been asked to give 4 workshops. I look forward to sharing about both of these experiences.

TESTIMONIAL

There was no explanation. A weak, short and twisted foot, double scoliosis, a hole between my trachea and esophagus, only 1 kidney and no nerve connection to my bowel or bladder. No one knows why I was born with so many problems. My first surgery took place when I was 2 hours old. Since then I've had 16 more.

In looking back I see that God's hand was on me from the very beginning. I was born into a family that could afford the health care I needed. I was not despised or pitied by my family; yet they understood my physical limits and gave me the help I needed. My parents are Christians and they took me to church even as a baby. I grew up in the church; attending Sunday School then later youth group. So it seems that I've always known who God was and that He loved me. At age 13 I decided that I wanted God to be my best friend. Because of these many blessings, I did not think much about my physical situation.

It was when I was about 15 that I became angry with God. My physical problems limited what I could do. I wanted to be pretty and popular but instead felt ugly and alone. I remember locking myself in the bathroom crying, shaking my fist at heaven and yelling, "If you are love, how could you do this to me? If you are all powerful how come you allowed this to happen?" My buried anger towards God lasted many years.

Through my years of anger, I tried everything but God. But by the time I was 20 I understood that happiness couldn't be found in money; alcohol was a short thrill that had a deadly end; education only solved some problems; no government was perfect and no matter how many laws were put in place and people were just by nature bad - even me. In short, I understand that nothing mankind had to offer was lasting or brought contentment. And while I couldn't explain God and all His ways, in Him there was true joy and peace. At the age of 21 I made public my choice to be a follower of Jesus Christ and baptized by immersion.

I wish I could say that I followed God faithfully after that but that is not true. I so desired to be loved that I turned away from God again for 3 years as I sought love in the wrong places. Despite

the fact that I rebelled against Him for so many years, God never gave up on me. At the time I didn't see it but in insisting on having my own way I was losing everything that was truly important.

C. S. Lewis, rightly calls God the 'Hound of Heaven' because it is with an unrelenting passion that He seeks a relationship with us. In His love, God let me experience the painful results of my rebellion and my world shattered. I was at the end of myself – everywhere serious and embarrassing problems that I couldn't fix. Knowing that no one could help me like He could, I cried out and asked God for help. I agreed with God that in making myself the most important thing in my life that I had done wrong and told Him I was sorry. Then, in faith, I accepted His forgiveness.

Then one day God chose to give me a gift. As a nurse, I had been assigned to the Intensive Care Unit for babies and there in one of the incubators lay a 2 _ lb girl with the same diagnosis I had. It was the first time I had seen someone just like me and I stood just stared at her. So little and twisted: so many tubes and wires. It was if a circle closed that day for me. A wound healed inside. That moment joy sprung up within me and I whispered over her, "You have hope little one. You have hope."

From that day on I have understood the purpose of my situation. Yes, I have a weak leg, twisted back, only one kidney, a colostomy and urinary stoma but I no longer pity myself. Rather, I consider my physical situation a gift from God. The world calls me imperfect but I call my physical limitations gifts. They are gifts because they allow me to look into your eyes and say, "I understand how hard this is. I truly do. I have walked the road you are on and you have hope my friend. You have hope."

The anger, depression and desire to die 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.

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. As you make choices to eat healthy foods to regain your strength after your surgery, so you must eat spiritual food to grow in Christ. 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 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 say that your bad choices cannot decrease His love and your good choices will not increase His love. God's 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 me. 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-measureable 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?

June/Kristina