



Our First Holiday Away from Our Family

This season was the first Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day that the Ransoms spent away from family. Thanksgiving is not celebrated here in this country, but we were able to spend the evening with three other missionaries from our mission. We enjoyed a traditional meal including a Turkey and stuffing! We spent Christmas with some of Jessica's aunts, uncles, and cousins who live here in Manila. It was nice. Still, we couldn't help missing mom, dad, and siblings we grew up with. I think that in my 35 years, this was only the 2nd time that I didn't see my Mom on Christmas Day.

New Years in the Philippines reminded me of the 4th of July when I was a kid, before they outlawed fireworks in Los Angeles. Every corner here seemed to have a fireworks stand. I couldn't resist buying a few bottle rockets. The boys and I shot off several rockets early in the evening. It was a bit too much for little Grace to handle, so she was quickly back in the house with Jess. We learned that the real festivities started at 10pm and carried on through Midnight. With all the fireworks and an occasional gun shooting off, our neighborhood sounded like a war zone. Fortunately, God was gracious and we heard no accounts of anyone getting hurt in our neighborhood.



We spent a couple of days in Baguio with Jessica's cousin Nickie and her family.

Christian's Corner

I like it in the Philippines because I have a really cool school. I made lots of fun friends.

Gabriel and Caleb are two of my best friends

from school. I like the rain because it is fun to get wet. My favorite thing that I have done in the Philippines is that I went on a cool boat ride. What I miss most is my family because I love them. It is good that we have family here too. It's been fun getting to know my cousins. I like them. I miss my old friends and my old church. I also miss the cool air. Other than that, I am very happy being here.



How's Tyler Doing?

Our littlest boy (Tyler) is really growing fast. He is seven months old and filling out quite well. He is crawling now, and just the other day he pulled himself up to a standing position on his own for the first time. We decided to take a peek at him when he was supposed to be sleeping, only to find him standing up in his play pen looking at us with a proud smile on his face. He has a lot of fun playing with his big brothers and sister. I foresee teeth in the horizon... time will tell how he handles that season of life.



Ministering in Batangas

We had the privilege of ministering to a church in a poor community in the province of Batangas, south of Manila. Sean preached at Santa Cruz Community Church on December 19th, the day of their special Christmas program. More than 500 kids attended, giving an opportunity for their parents to attend an evangelistic Christian service for the first time. There was enough food for all and even a gift for each child! The wonderful thing about this church is that it is pastored by a man who is a true product of missions. Pastor Roger Alcantara was lead to the Lord 13 years ago by a fellow missionary, Mike Waters. (Pastor Roger was Mike's first convert here in the Philippines). There is a photo of brother Mike Waters and Pastor Alcantara on our website at www.ransomreport.com, along with many more pictures of this special event. Please check it out!



There Is No Divorce in the Philippines

She pulled out a picture of her family for me to practice saying the phrase, "Who is this?" in Tagalog. I pointed to a man in the picture and asked her, "Sino ito?" (Who is this?). She quietly responded by saying something about regretting choosing the wrong person. Then she quickly changed the subject and returned her focus to teaching me her native tongue. After she turned to another picture, I pointed to a young lady and asked in Tagalog, "Sino ito?" With a smile she said, "That's my sister". She continued by telling me that she and her daughter were living with her sister and her sister's husband. I put one and one together and asked her what was happening with her husband. I would never have guessed that behind her sweet and smiling face that she was hurting on the inside. She didn't want to use up my language learning time, but it was obvious that ministering to her was more important than my lesson for that day. She began to get teary-eyed as she shared how her husband of 10 years left her and her daughter and started a new family with another woman.

She told me that her pastor told her that she had to remain separated from this man and that she could not divorce or remarry. She felt trapped. I shared with her 1 Corinthians 7, which says that if an unbelieving spouse abandons a spouse who is a believer, then the believing spouse is not bound to stay in that marriage. She was very surprised and was unaware that the bible says that. I told her that since her husband closed the door on their marriage getting back together, and because he committed adultery, she has biblical grounds to divorce him and is free to remarry if she chooses to. She responded by saying, "Sean, there is no divorce in the Philippines."

Sadly, many men in the Philippines have mistresses and multiple families. Wives are forced either to tolerate it, commit adultery themselves, or separate without divorcing; never to marry again. I shared with her other passages on divorce and gave her some material to study on the subject. She will be faced with the dilemma of honoring hundreds of years of Filipino cultural tradition or believing what God says in His word and living according to it. She expressed the desire to have a godly man in the life of her and her daughter, but her culture may cause her to remain alone the rest of her life. If she does remarry she may be looked down upon by her friends, family, and even her church. This is the culture of marriage in the Philippines and a reality that Jessica and I must face in our ministry. Please remember this dear sister in your prayers.

Please Pray for . . .

- Our language study
- More understanding of the culture
- Growth in our spiritual lives
- The bible study that meets in our home
- Protection for our family
- More vision for future ministry
- Wisdom in counseling
- Opportunities to share the gospel

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