

"Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us." - Ephesians 3:20

EXCEEDINGLY & ABUNDANTLY...



an incredible year! We just want to thank Jesus for all that he has done in 2008, and we both look forward to what He will do next in 2009.

It is hard to believe that is already 2009! Last year went so fast that we had to look at pictures just to remember what happened ;-). God made it one of the most amazing years of our lives. It was the year He called me to move over to the Philippines to Church plant. It was the year that He made Jen and I husband and wife. It was the year that we moved into our first house (*the one Jen grew up in*) together to begin loving and teaching the people in Himamaylan. It was the year that He started a church in the Bukid (*mountains*). It has been nothing short of

TRADITION?

Being a part of celebrating New Years here in the Philippines was quite an experience. It is the biggest holiday of the year here (*even more than Christmas*). It is celebrated by everyone getting together with all of your family and having LOTS of food. Then, right at the stroke of midnight, everyone (*and I do mean everyone*) sets off as many fireworks as they can. It is the loudest celebration that I have ever heard. The air turns white from all the smoke. The reason or all this revelry? No one knows. It's just tradition. The best guess as to it's roots goes back to a Filipino's Spanish heritage where the fireworks were set off in an attempt to scare away the evil spirits and bring in good luck for the coming year... nowadays its just tradition and what everyone does.

This provided us with a great opportunity to share about the reason for our Christian traditions. The people here in the Philippines know most of the traditions, but not the meaning behind them. We shared communion the first Sunday of the New Year at church and talked about the reason for our traditions. What we call the "Last supper" was Jesus celebrating the Passover feast with His disciples the night of His betrayal. The Passover had been celebrated by the nation of Israel for 1000 years by then (*and has been celebrated for another 2000 since*). It had become a tradition in Israel, one that had lost it's meaning to most. God told Moses that it was very important for the Children of Israel to remember the Passover because... "*And it shall be, when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?'*" - **Exodus 12:26** It was meant to provoke their kids to ask questions - questions that the parents could then answer to teach their children about God. Traditions are a wonderful tool if we remember what it is that they are meant to teach us. Christmas, Resurrection Sunday, Communion are all tools that allow us to teach others about the amazing hope we have in Jesus! The desire is that the saints here will not only celebrate our Christian traditions but know what they stand for.



ANG MGA BATA (THE KIDS)

But Jesus said, 'Let the little children come unto Me, and so not forbid them; for such is the kingdom of heaven.'" - **Matthew 9:14**



We have been getting a lot of kids coming out for Sunday service in the Bukid. Just last week we had between 30-40 of them running all around the little nipa (palm roof) church. Jen and I have been really praying about how we can best minister to these kids. It seems that many of the parents (*the majority of whom are catholic*) are hesitant to show up to church themselves, but they are more than willing to send their kids. This gives us a great opportunity to love the kids and also reach out to the parents.

Several people have been stepping up in the church to serve in the children's ministry. Please be praying for them as they reach out and love these precious little ones!

CARING FOR THOSE IN NEED...

If one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but do not give them the things which are needed for the body what does it profit?" - **James 2:16** We have been prayerfully helping out with some of those in need in the community. When we were Christmas caroling last month we met a young lady who was so sick from Pneumonia and Tuberculosis she only weighed 60lbs. After several trips to see her (*bringing good fattening food*) her family made the decision to take her to the hospital. The Lord put it on Jen's and mine heart to help out in any way that we could. By Jesus grace she is doing much better now and is back at home.

Pray for us that we are sensitive to the Lord's leading and keep the balance between ministering to physical needs (*and there are many*) but not miss the greatest need of salvation. Jesus told His disciples in **John 14:12** that they would do greater works than Him. Jesus raised the dead and healed the sick what could possibly be greater? Even if you heal the sick and raise the dead they still get sick again and will one day die. The greatest ministry of all is sharing the eternal hope of salvation in Jesus Christ!

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Many of those here in the Philippines take jobs overseas because of the low pay they receive in country. While the pay is much better it also means being away from your family and kids for up to 2 years at a time. As many of them work in the Muslim gulf states it is also very difficult for them to find a church to attend. One of the men from the church here who was about to head out for overseas work asked if we could record the Sunday messages so that he could continue to be taught while abroad. It was from this request that www.simbahansabukid.com was born. It will be a tool that families can share with their loved ones overseas so that they can also be taught and encouraged through the Word. If you want to check out the site you are more than welcome, but just so that you know it's still a work in progress and its all in Illongo :-)

PRAYER REQUESTS

- For the Sunday service in the Mountains & the other Bible Studies - and for those who come to hear the Word!
- My language lessons - learning a little more everyday :-)
- For my health. I have been struggling with a good cold for about 2 weeks now and am not getting better :-(
- For our marriage - our time in the Word together as we keep Jesus at the center!

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