

October 2020

"I being in the way, the LORD led me..." - Genesis 24:27



The Philippines is currently under one of the strictest and longest lasting quarantines in the world. They have four levels of quarantine that individual cities and provinces can be put under. The city of Bacolod was on the fourth and lowest level called MGCQ (*Modified General Community Quarantine*) up until about a month ago. Rising cases of the virus caused the government to become more strict and the city was placed on the 2nd level called MECQ (*Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine*). The result is that all public transportation as well as any gatherings of over 5 people are forbidden (*including churches*). No children under the age of 21 or adults over the age of 60 are allowed to go into any

business. Face masks as well as face shields are required

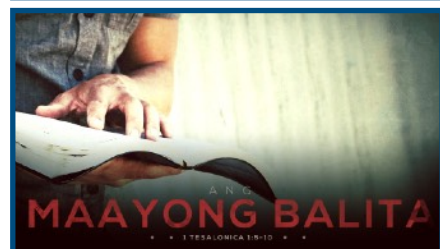
to go into most establishments. All that to say it has been a rather interesting month as we have navigated through these regulations while looking to see how the Lord might open doors for ministry here.

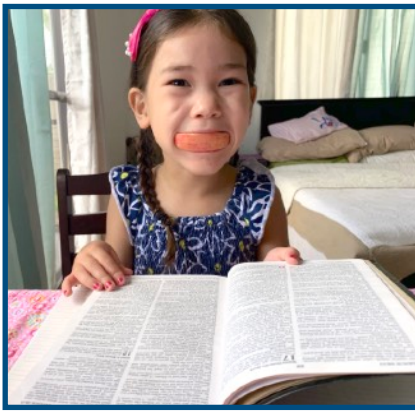
We decided to step out towards the end of last month through Facebook. Facebook is something of a behemoth here. Of the 107 million people in the Philippines 80 million are on Facebook (*second only to the US*). The challenge was I tried multiple times to upload a message only to have them frustratingly fail after hours of waiting due to slow internet speeds. Then a couple of days later we were surprised (*on a Sunday morning*) by PLDT

(*local telecommunications company*) coming to connect us to FIOS

(*we signed up in early July but they were backlogged*). That gave us the connection we needed to actually upload messages! As an experiment I ran a small promo on the newly named Facebook page - *Bible Fellowship Bacolod*. Within a few days we had over 800 likes (*it is now over 1700*)! The following Sunday we live-streamed our first message as we began teachings through the book of 1 Thessalonians. It is a bit odd teaching in front of a green screen (*with shorts on*) to the blank stare of a lifeless camera but people seem to be connecting and enjoying the messages.

That same week I got a surprise call from Pastor Jun (*Calvary Chapel North in Bacolod*). He shared that he had not been able to get to the church since March because of the quarantine. He lives in Dumaguete which is around a 6 hour drive from Bacolod. He asked if I would be able to help with pastoring the church since they have not been able to meet for over 6 months. The first hurdle that needed to be overcome is a place for them to meet. They had been gathering in a hotel function room near the heart of Bacolod but the hotel has since converted to a quarantine facility and they will no longer let groups meet there. We have been contacting friends in the city to see if we can locate an alternative place to hold services. The hope is when the city gets downgraded again and churches are allowed to meet we will have a place for everyone to gather for Sunday morning services!





Two days after the call from Pastor Jun I was in Bacolod to pick up a cell phone. As it turned out back when we were in Japan I had dropped my phone in a river. Jen, Hallel and I had gone down to the Kintai bridge one Saturday. It has not rained in several weeks so the river level was unusually low. I thought it would be fun to walk under the bridge and wade in the still waters with Hallel. I had just finished admonishing her to be careful because the rocks were still slippery when - as you might have surmised - I instead slipped and went right into the water (*not my most dignified moment*). I was not in the water long, but it was long enough for my phone to get a bath. I thought the phone was water proof, as it turned out the phone was only water resistant! Several of the key features on the phone ceased working. I have Apple care and can get it fixed, but after spending many hours on the phone with Apple it turns out **ONLY** in the US. I procrastinated for months getting a replacement phone and shipping the broken one to California (*I knew it would take several month to get it back*) but finally decided to pull the trigger.

I looked up a places to buy used phones on google and the store I just *happened* to go into ended up being owned by a gentlemen named Michael. When I walked in I inquired in the local dialect what used phones they had for sale. Michael was surprised by a big foreigner conversing in Ilonggo. He asked long I have been in the Philippines followed by what brought me here. When I told him I was a pastor he asked if I was from Calvary Chapel! It turns out he is from Calvary North and was the one who first asked for a Calvary in Bacolod. He had heard there was an American pastor who was going to help out and guessed it might be me. We were both amazed! The Lord used my unceremonious baptizing of my phone to lead me right to where I needed to be - Genesis 24:27!



In the mean time we have been blessed to help out with another church in city of Silay a few miles north of us (*the brother of our dear friend Teresita is the pastor*). They have asked me to come every week and teach a Bible study to help them learn how to study and teach through the Bible. We have started going through the book of Genesis and it has been a huge blessing!

Amazing open doors! We are prayerfully looking to see how we can continue moving forward with these new opportunities! Challenging but exciting times!

On the home front, homeschool for Hallel has gone into high gear. Jen has been busy over the past month creating an interactive classroom in our bedroom. I wake up every morning to a chalkboard with the latest accomplishment of Hallel scribbled all over. It is amazing to watch the two of them as Hallel soaks up her classes. She has found quite the passion for art and cooking. I had to laugh just the other day when she woke up and said she did **NOT** want to go to school today. Jen offered to let her put on her school uniform and suddenly, miraculously, there was a complete change of heart and school was back on! She is all GIRL and all PRINCESS!

Jen and I also just celebrated our twelfth anniversary. As we could not go anywhere (*lock down*) we instead made a quaint candle light dinner at the house. It was a nice way to finish out a busy but fruitful month. We covet your continued prayers as we look forward to seeing what the last few months of 2020 hold for us here in the Philippines.

Love - David, Jen, and Hallel

