

A God Sighting

A story of divine leading in Honduras.

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If you've been on a mission trip, you know what a "God sighting" is. We don't see them very often here at home, mostly because we are not looking for them. We tend to think that we accomplish all that gets done by ourselves. But when you are in a foreign country where you have no control over the circumstances, and no one knows who you are or understands what you are trying to say, you learn to depend on and recognize God's hand in all that gets accomplished. This is a "God sighting."

Such is the case in the following story. It concerns a matter I had all but given up on.

After my trip to Honduras the year before, I found I was burdened for the plight of the women at Mt. Hebron. I had spent countless hours on the internet trying to come up with some skill I could teach the women that would provide income for them. I checked out soap making, candle making and basket weaving, and even did research into micro enterprise development and micro finance. I discovered that I was in way over my head! What I wanted to do required a large organization and fulltime workers. I prayed. I searched for answers. And then I gave up! I said, "Lord, I don't know why you gave me this burden. I can't do anything about it; I don't know how." And that's where I left it.

I was anxious to return to Honduras this year, to see the friends I had left behind and to reach out in any way I could, but trying to teach a skill was no longer on my mind. I was going to be more observant this year and check out available resources, talk to the people, and get a feel for what might interest them.

The very first day there, Scott Carper, a missionary in Honduras, stopped at the compound while we were sorting through clothing to give away. Naturally the conversation turned to "hand-outs versus hand-ups." Well, I dove into my year-long research project and my frustration with it.

Scott assured me it was a difficult task and probably would not be well accepted by the people. "If you could teach them to sew," he said, "that would be the best thing. There are sewing factories in La Ceiba where they could get work or they could make their own things to sell."

Yes, that sounded good. But how could I teach them to sew with no machine, no electricity, and only two weeks! He agreed it wasn't going to happen.

Later that day another local missionary, Roger Reeck, stopped at the compound. Again our conversation turned to how to teach these women a skill. Roger said, "If you could only teach them how to sew." (Was someone trying to tell me something?) I reiterated to Roger how impossible that would be in the short time I would be there. He was silent for a minute and then said, "I know someone you need to meet. I'll come by tomorrow and take you to visit them. I think they can help you." With that he said his good-byes and was gone.

What was that all about?

The next day it rained. And rained. The streets were flooded, the schools were closed, and it rained. Roger did stop by to say that we would not be able to get where he wanted to take me because of the flooded roads. Okay, so much for that.

Thursday, the sun came up bright and hot. No more rain for awhile, but we still had to postpone our Bible School because of the mud and because the men hadn't gotten as much done at the church as they had hoped, due to the rain. I was getting a little discouraged because we, the women, had not been able to do any ministry up to this point. Schools were still closed because of mucho agua (much water), so we could not even get into a classroom to teach.

Why was it we were just sitting at the compound? Shouldn't we be somewhere, doing something? No sooner had these thoughts been verbalized, than in comes Roger with three women behind him. "These are the ladies I wanted you to meet. They were coming to town, so I thought it would be easier just to bring them to you."

Two of the women I recognized immediately as the two women I had sat with on the plane coming to San Pedro Sulu! I had spoken to them on the plane and knew they were going to La Ceiba and that they were doing some kind of mission work there. The third woman was a native Honduran. Introductions were made and Roger had to be on his way. So he



A sewing class

left us to do what we women do best, talk.

Mary and Barb were from Minnesota and affiliated with an organization called "Herald of Faith." This organization operates sewing schools in Honduras! The Honduran, Maria, is the instructor for the sewing schools! Not only did she teach

sewing, but also nutrition, some cooking and, best of all, Bible study. As it turns out, they were about to close one of their schools due to lack of sufficient funding for students. The school in question is in El Pino, exactly 1.2 miles from Mt. Hebron!

"Just how expensive is this school?" I asked.

Well, it would be about \$30 per month per student and another \$30 per student for the supplies! That's \$330 total for ten months of schooling. I'm getting excited! This is do-able. If I could get three women from Mt. Hebron interested in going to school, I was sure I could find someone to sponsor them. I would do it myself, if need be. We decided that I would first talk to the women and see if there was any interest, and then we would meet on Tuesday at 3:00 p.m. at the school so we could all see it and the ladies could meet their teacher.

"Just three women, Lord, that would be a great start."

On Sunday evening we had a picnic at Mt. Hebron. Maira Raudales had agreed to translate for me as I explained the plan to the women. That was fun. I would say something and then I could watch their faces as Maira translated. Their eyes grew wide with excitement and disbelief. There were some guarded smiles, but there was definitely interest. I came away with twelve names of women who wanted to enroll in sewing school.

"Twelve! I don't know, Lord. Twelve might be a few too many to find sponsors for, but we'll see. Come Tuesday at 3:00, we will see just how many of them are really interested."

My husband, Don, had been having his own little chats with the Lord. Some time between Sunday and Tuesday, he decided that with God's help he would be able to figure out how to make a portable electric sewing machine into a treadle machine so the ladies could perhaps have a machine in their homes. He wanted to come with us to the school to see the machines and how they had been con-

verted. "Wouldn't it be neat if we could bring them each a machine next year? After all, Mary and Barb said they bring machines down all the time as a carry-on. So could we, right?"

Was this just an idea or a thought-out plan? I didn't know, nor did I ask.

Tuesday, 3:00 p.m.: I was right! We would see just how many of them were really interested. Instead of 12, we found 15 eager faces waiting for us to take them to see their new school! In the van, these women were like giggling schoolgirls, excited and definitely interested. Maria explained to them that school would be two hours a day, two days a week, for ten months, March to December. We took each of their pictures so we could share them with their soon-to-be sponsors.

Don came along to look at the machines, but they were out being repaired. However, that didn't stop me from plunging forward. I thought the women might need more incentive, so I promised them that if they completed the course and got a diploma, we would bring them a sewing machine next year.

"Lord, if you can help me find 15 sponsors, surely you can help me find 15 sewing machines, too."

There was one more hurdle to cross. Maria said she would need money for supplies (\$30 per student) before we left Honduras. Well, I didn't have \$450 with me and I wasn't sure where that was going to come from. I talked to the team about it. They had been behind me all through this miraculous development and were anxious to help. They said they would all dig in their pockets and surely we could come up with \$450. What generous hearted people!

Then our team leader spoke up. He said, "We all contributed money for this Honduras project, and we have accomplished everything and more that we came to do. There is still money left in the fund specified for Honduras, about \$450!" It was a unanimous vote to use the money for the supplies needed to get the women started in school.

And so it began, "The Lord's Sewing School." We found 15 sponsors in less than a week after returning home. We also have four or five sewing machines promised. Others have taken on the responsibility of prayer warriors for these women and still others are putting together care packages for them.

What a wonderful God we serve! To bring together a school that was about to close with the people who were looking for some way to teach this skill to others is something only God could do. So you see, God sightings really aren't that difficult to spot, if you are looking for and expecting them!