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on surrender. Not just surrendering your own junk, past hurts, insecurities and such, but surrendering the pain you see others experiencing, pain that seems so unfair, uncalled for, and cruel. The pain of innocent children losing parents, siblings, and loved ones to a disease that is also coursing through their own veins. Pain on the faces of young women who realize that because of their disease, they will never be able to marry the young man they love. HIV/AIDS is a big, cruel monster. It destroys lives, weakens bodies, and slowly steals people. Too many times I have had conversations with God in which I was so angry with Him for allowing this to happen to innocent children. But through many hours of Bible study and surrendered prayer, I was offered peace. Peace that surpasses ALL understanding; peace I did not know I longed for.

Jesus teaches In John 9 a lesson that is easy to overlook. Like other instances in the Bible, Jesus's disciples are asking him questions, he is teaching them a lesson, someone is healed… et cetera. But so simply and plainly, Jesus provides the one answer for every question pertaining to the modern doubt of "why do bad things happen to good people?" I encourage you to read this account of John and see for yourself what I will explain. Jesus' disciples ask him who sinned that a man should be born blind? Was it his parents or the man himself? Jesus answers and in one sentence changed my entire perspective. Jesus said that it was not a matter of anyone sinning that the man was given the disability; instead, it was a matter of God's work being revealed through the disabled man. Jesus then makes mud, rubs it on the man's eyes, tells him to go wash, and the man is healed, thus literally revealing God's work through the (previously) disabled man.

My biggest dream in life is first for all of the kids to become effective disciples who are in love with God, and second, for their lives, no matter how long, to mean something. I am confidant that God loves these children even more than I ever could. In fact, I am basically just delivering a watered-down version of God's love to them. The real stuff is much more concentrated and rich! I believe God when he says he has plans for them, to prosper them and not to harm them (Jeremiah 29:11). I believe Him who says that one day he will wipe every tear from their eyes… and they will suffer no more pain (Revelation 21:4). One day, I will be able to see all of my kids perfectly healthy, restored, glowing, and risen. The pain of this life may not be lifted until Heaven, but that hope alone is enough to pull me through the toughest of days, days in which I console a crying teenager fiercely battling thoughts of suicide, days in which I weep with a young girl who has just lost her father to the same disease passed on to her. Days when everything seems perfectly unfair, I am reminded of the hope we are given through Jesus's selfless act, that one day we will be united with our creator and sorrow, mourning, death, and pain will be no more. If that does not inspire you to push forward in your hardest of days, then I am not sure what will. As Jesus tells his disciples in John 9, disabilities, accidents, trials, even diseases, are given to those whom God will use to reveal his miraculous works. This one healing by Jesus further reminds me that where medicine sometimes will fail us, God is waiting to perform a miracle. I pray earnestly and wait for the day when those miracles will be revealed.

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- ***50 Open Spots for Christian Professional Leadership Summit***
  International Churches of Christ (ICOC) Co-operation Churches — Wednesday, October 02 2013
  Nearly two years ago I read an interesting quote that went something like—"about three out of four of the great things done in the Bible were accomplished...
- ***Good News from Lebanon Singles Ministry***
  Middle East & Sudan Churches of Christ — Friday, 27 September 2013
  The Singles Ministry in Lebanon recently celebrated two baptisms. One new sister Joyce and a new brother Dany were baptized. Joyce has her thumb up in this celebratory baptism photo. Joyce was able to overcome...
- ***Discover Your Talents with HOPE worldwide Singles Corps!***
  Zack Goodwin - Hope Worldwide — Friday, 27 September 2013
  This fall, discover ways you can use your gifts and talents by serving with HOPE worldwide Singles Corps in Port of Spain, Trinidad. From Oct 26-31, singles from around the world will come to this Caribbean...
- ***Husbands and Fathers of Courage International***
  Chad Billman — Thursday, 26 September 2013
  Darin Ford is the Group Administrator for Husbands and Fathers of Courage International. In this Facebook Group, Darin posts questions creating an open forum...

• UPCOMING EVENTS

Southeast Singles Retreat
Myrtle Beach, SC, USA
October 11-13, 2013

Biblical Studies Tour & International Teachers Seminar
Greece & Turkey
October 19-26 2013

New York City Singles Spiritual Enrichment Weekend
Stamford Connecticut, USA
October 25-27, 2013

Caribbean Conference
Port of Spain, Trinidad
Novmeber 1-3, 2013

Southwest Christian Conference
Long Beach, CA, USA
November 8-10, 2013

Vietnam Church 20th Anniversary
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
July 5-6, 2014

CONNECTING DISCIPLES IN CHURCHES AROUND THE WORLD

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My Faith Was Rocked

Sierra Freeman, Atlanta, USA — Friday, 20 September 2013



A lot of people would agree that giving selflessly in a third world country will have an impact on you, and I guess that was really my only initial hope in going to India. I hesitantly joined a group of my closest friends on a trip to India in May of 2012. What I did not expect, and the most important outcome of my first time there, were the ways in which my faith would be rocked to its most basic foundation and how connected and in love I would become with some of God's most beautiful creations. Now if that sounds too "mushy" and "heartsy" for you, I would have probably thought the same thing a year and half ago. Actually, before I was a disciple, I swore India would be the last place I would ever want to travel to. Ironically, it is the FIRST place I have ever gone to outside the United States and now I cannot picture myself living anywhere else. But enough about me, I am absolutely the least interesting part of my stories of India, only a mirror reflecting the light of God's love, patience, and sacrifice for me in order to bring 38 beautifully sick children out of the darkness and give them a voice.

The orphanage is a home for women and children infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. They are located in a small, remote, underdeveloped village in Southern India, about 2 hours south of Chennai in the state of Tamil Nadu. Only a few people in the village have running water, only very basic electricity, and almost everyone just sleeps on the dirt floors every night (they do, however, have cell phones!) The simplicity that life there offers is so attractive. No one killing themselves working 80-hour weeks to be able to afford an over-sized mortgage and three luxury car payments and still be saving enough for retirement. They live in the present. Doing enough to provide for their families today, not worrying about the future. I feel like a completely different person there, walking around barefoot, bathing in wells, dodging snakes that cross my path. I feel complete there, closer to God than anywhere else, more dependent on him for my basic needs, more aware of my own weaknesses and able to witness how God turns them into strengths.

There are so many directions I could go with this; so many lessons I have (sometimes very) painfully learned. But perhaps the most life changing one is

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