No Comparison

Amy De Raedt 24 July 2023



In mid-June a team of twelve people from different Four12 churches across South Africa went on a ministry trip to JoshGen Upstate in Spartanburg, South Carolina. Throughout our time there, I kept coming back to the last words in John's Gospel that say, "[there] are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written" (John 21:25).

This trip has been one big testimony from start to finish, and what I've written here could never contain the many, many things that Jesus did, but these are just a few of the things He did in my heart before, during and after the trip.

Before the Trip

Earlier this year, I started to take stock of my view of the Lord's goodness, and my understanding of it had three levels:

- The first level was how good I thought the Lord was.
- The second level was my belief that the Lord was good – but deep down I didn't believe that He could actually be "that good". I'd placed a handful of hopes and hearts desires on this

level, and this trip to the States was one of them.

- And then the third level – with a chasm separating it from the second – is how good the Lord actually is.

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Signing up for this trip proved to be a real trust exercise, and in taking the risk and trusting the Lord – something my sometimes-too-rational-for-its-own-good, prone to-sinful-self-preservation heart struggled to do – I began to dismantle the lie that the Lord couldn't do what I'd placed on the "that good" level, and began to have faith that He could – and that even if He didn't, He was still good and still trustworthy.

Within the same week of getting my visa approved – with my visa appointment and flight tickets to said appointment having been the only part of this trip I could actually afford – the Lord provided. For flight tickets, through the lavish generosity of people. For expenses on that side, through perfectly-timed extra jobs I'd been given. For everything I needed and more. And just like that, before I'd even stepped foot in the States, He had already begun to work the literal, life-changing truth into my heart that "nothing is too hard for Him" (Jeremiah 32:17).

During the Trip

What We Received

It's often said of outreaches that while you go to give, you end up receiving even more, and this could not have been more true of our time on this trip.

I was hosted by the Senn family – a precious, powerhouse couple in the church with three young children – and from the first evening I kept thinking to myself, "I can't believe I get to be hosted by this family!"

Their love, hospitality, generosity and encouragement blessed me so much that, more often than not, it felt like I was the one being ministered to. Were they perfect? No. But did their home, their marriage, the way they raised their children, and the way they loved the church point back to Jesus and the pattern He's given us in Scripture? A hundred times, yes.

> **Within less than two weeks the Lord had knitted hearts together on the team and with the church**

There's something about staying in someone's home for over a week that lets you see something you just can't at a Wednesday gathering or Sunday meeting. And after staying with this family, I can confidently say that these people are the real deal: leaders who can be trusted, a family worthy of imitating, and people who are so incredibly easy to love – and so incredibly hard to say goodbye to.

I won't even try to share about everyone else who I had the joy of meeting and doing life with – from the leaders to the saints to the visitors in-between – people who opened up their hearts and homes and lives. Within less than two weeks the Lord had knitted hearts together on the team and with the church, and I left South Carolina with a full heart, while also feeling like I'd left a little piece of it there.

What We Gave

Leading up to the trip, the team had received various prophetic pictures about spiritual gifts, and how we weren't to be limited by what we thought our gifts were. Gifts I've often been affirmed in are hospitality, administration and generosity. Not only was I on the receiving end of incredible hospitality from my host family, but it turns out that one of the ladies on our team with whom I was being hosted was the epitome of the gifts of administration and generosity.

Throughout the trip I found myself in moments where I thought, "I could either partner with comparison and self-pity, believing the unhelpful lie that my value is wrapped up in how my gifts measure up to those around me, or I could rest secure in the fact that the person who carries the gift counts for very little, as long as it is used for the common good. And I could trust the Lord – the Giver of all gifts – to use me as a vessel, however He sees fit, however different it may look. Oh Lord, help me to do the latter!"

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It was in this that two gifts I'd rarely felt I had – the prophetic and working with children – were the two areas in which I was probably the most stretched (and affirmed) on this trip. I left in awe of the Lord – of how intentional He is with every detail of these times, how patient as we wrestle

things out, and how incredibly kind to let us co-labour with Him in building His Bride.

After the Trip

I'll end this the same way I began it – there are many, many other things Jesus did. Far too many to write about and probably many more that I won't even know about on this side of eternity.

But my hope is that, until Jesus returns, we never stop writing, talking and sharing about what He has done. May we be a people who "cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). A people who are quick to put their hands up for ministry trips and outreaches. A people who live their lives with the joyful conviction that Jesus really, truly is the greatest adventure. A people devoted to loving and building Jesus' Bride in South Carolina, South Africa and every nation, tribe and tongue in-between.