

Final Thoughts On Being in Mongolia

I don't want to live in Mongolia. I suppose that will sound like I didn't like being in Mongolia or that I don't like Mongolia. Neither of those things would be true because I did like being there and found Mongolia to be a fascinating place full of sights and sounds that wonderfully inhabit my memory. Let me tell you why I liked being in Mongolia.

First, I was able to spend time with the Warners. I have always known that the best way to get to know people is to visit them at their home. In that sense, I was able to get to know the Warner family. They are delightful people who have made themselves available to the Lord to serve in Mongolia. They live there under conditions that most of us would consider pretty tough. But, they are at home and believe that God is using them. By being who they are, they are able to send out messages about the goodness and care of God. They give out food, provide water, build houses and live their lives under the scrutiny of people who know nothing about Jesus. Sometimes they get to talk to people about the Savior and even pray with them. I think I witnessed one of those special moments when they prayed with the mayor of their town who came to see if they could help in any way. His daughter had been diagnosed with a brain tumor. Care could only be given in Korea and the cost would be prohibitive. They prayed but simply asked the Lord for direction because they had no idea what to do. The Warners are very aware of the support they receive from a number of churches. In conversations, both Rick and Donna would point out various things which are a part of their home and ministry which were provided by churches in America. They are grateful for the support and understand that people are praying for them.

I should also point out that we enjoyed wonderful hospitality at their hands. Our accommodations were great. Our food was superb. It is no easy trick to provide for a hungry team of workers who know how to chow down. Donna had a great menu. Her mom, Arlene Robbins, there on a visit, helped with the menu and did the dishes every night. Alayna made sure that we had great desserts. (She was concerned that I might lose weight while I was there. I did lose weight but I can imagine it would have been much more without Alayna's delicious specialties.) Katy assured that wild Rook games filled the night with laughter and shouts of bids that were much too high.

Second, I was glad to be a part of the work that was to be done. We went to help Rick and his crew build a house for the town of Tuvshrulik. I have not been on many missions trips but I know I must stencil the word flexible on the inside of my forehead because you can never be sure about what is going to happen, what is not available or what unforeseen obstacle is lurking out there. In the case of our project, the previous crew, Byron Widger, Chad Hartzell and Jered Heater had done a great job (actually, the dirty work) of cleaning out the site and removing an old useless foundation. When we showed up, we began to lay boards on the foundation already in place and it was upward from there. I admit I was often tired but it was a good tired that allowed you to put weary bones on a mattress feeling good about what you had done. That good feeling might seem selfish but is not altogether a bad reason for going to do a project like this. When the house is completed, it will provide for two families who could use some help. I understand that the mayor will pick families to live in the house who will then

commit themselves to community service for a time. We who worked on the house know that a message will be sent out that there were some people who loved Jesus enough to go and help to build a house that will carry what we all hope will be the not so silent message of the love of Jesus.

Third, I gained three brothers who each made an impact on my life. It would be trite and melodramatic to say that we became a band of brothers. You do become something more than casual friends when you share sleeping quarters, night noises and 13 hour flights. I knew Chris Merrick before the trip began. I discovered that he can do or fix anything. Maybe I am exaggerating but there was no plumbing, electrical, architectural or automotive project that could make him admit defeat. The only reason he did not do more is that a day only has 24 hours. I learned that he can fall asleep instantly on even the hardest bed and that his energy is boundless. I did not know Nelson Randolph before we met but, as soon as we met at the Cedar Crest Bible Fellowship Church, I realized very quickly what to expect as he unfolded the duffel bags and started stuffing them with things he had been able to accumulate. Candy, underwear, tooth brushes, toothpaste, toys and who knows what else were stuffed into bags that we transported to Mongolia. I listened to his stories and saw his passion finding bargains and sales. His joy is in helping and supplying what might not be available to missionaries and the people they serve. What he put in the luggage at Cedar Crest was divided up and given in bags to over 70 children in the town where the Warners live. And I did not know Joel Alderfer before we set out. He was in some ways the leader of the pack since he is by trade a carpenter. He knew just how the building had to go together. He and Rick would plan our days by figuring out what wood was needed, what tools would be required and how it would all fit together. His pleasant disposition was an encouragement and support to all. I did not see even one display of impatience with a person like me who is “carpentry” challenged.

My only regret is that it was not possible to get closer to Mongolians. The language barrier was just too wide. They know very little English. I know less Mongolian. The men who were part of our work crew were a delight (Tumerhoyag, Losendorj, Byamunk, Dampo, Inktaiven 1 and Inktaiven 2 – don’t worry about spelling). We communicated on the job by pointing and gesturing. But their smiles and twinkling eyes communicated much more. The homes we were able to visit were filled with hospitality (even if we did not eat or like everything offered). I loved watching the Mongolians on their ponies. It seems like rider and horse are one. There is a lot to like about Mongolians. I would like to have had conversations that did not need a translator.

Two weeks after returning I find myself doing the reverse of what I did in Mongolia. When I was in Mongolia, I could calculate what time it was back home and think about what people were doing. It was a quick and easy calculation – subtract 12 hours. I find myself looking at my watch and doing the calculation that tells me what time it is in Mongolia – add 12 hours. What are they doing there now? I have already heard that the progress on the home continues and that the temperature has dropped. And I think how God is using the Warners to show the love of Jesus to a wonderful people who know little of it.

Pastor Taylor