

## Testimony

As some of you know I have been in India and Germany for the past 8 months. Let me start by first saying it is so good to be back with you all. I have come to realize that I have taken many things for granted, not the least among them would be what a gift God has given me with my church family.

I left 8 months ago headed for India for 6 months, then Germany for 2 months to serve Love n Care Ministries and Yesupadam and his family. I did not fully understand at that time how drastic my life would change. I was called by God to go to India and Germany, and though I didn't know it at the time of the call, I was to homeschool Yesupadam's children (talk about Yesupadam). I lived in their home and was made to feel like I was a part of the family. I not only taught his children, I also assisted in tutoring the children at the Bethany School. It is a school that serves 500+ students both with education and 3 meals every day. I also sang in the English worship service, and at functions and just generally helping with whatever else the family needed.

I have many stories to tell. My family is only beginning to hear SOME of them! Stories where God redeems, stories where God rescues, stories of hard, hard hearts that are softened by the word of God and watch as that stoney heart melts and a life is transformed by the undeserved mercy of God. As much as I would love to tell everyone here about all my experiences this morning, time is not on my side. What I want to testify about and what I want to make sure everyone hears, is the incredible, absolute power of prayer and the blessing of serving sacrificially.

Before I left for India, my prayer life was non-existent. I prayed only at meals or at gatherings, or on the rare occasion when I was at the end of my rope and had tried everything else. Instead of going to God first, I went to him last, if at all. I felt like God had enough to deal with, why should I bother him with things if I can do it on my own. Never really hearing the arrogance and pride in my heart. On the other side of that coin, I never really believed or understood the true power of prayer. Oh sure, I could read the bible and understand in here (head), but I never really grasped it in hear (heart), even though I thought I did. If we take things to God, instead of the feeling of frustration or (put out), he fills us with peace. We find assurance that though all else may fail he remains the same and in the end, we have complete and unwavering confidence and security in knowing that he is in complete control and in the end the outcome, will be His. Prayer is not only the power to heal and to deliver, both of which I have seen and experienced these past months, but it also our lifeline in our walk with God. Praying, helps us to realize how awesome our God really is, not just with the big things, but with small things as well. Humbling ourselves before God and not being afraid to go to him for the little things strengthens our relationship with him. While I was in India, God continually gifted me with both great and small things. Even when I craved mint chocolate, and never told anybody, my favorite Andy's candy, arrived in India, brought by one of the teams for Monika who doesn't like them (Praise God). Oreos, what I had been craving throughout my stay, were given to me by one the children, whom they had been given by someone who brought them for her from another state because they weren't available here. Healings, which I have received from God which no other doctor could heal. Whereas before, I would have thought, I had done these things, or that they

happened by chance, I was only now able to recognize that they are gifts from God. Only through my fellowship with him, was I able to see his desire to bless us with things that we not only need but that we want. He is that good and mysteriously loving and generous.

This brings me to serving sacrificially, and the gifts that lie therein. To be honest, my time in India and Germany was honestly the hardest thing I've ever had to do in my life. The best way I can describe my time is by quoting from Romans 5:3-5...

“3 More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

God gave me these verses for my trip. Out of all the pain and suffering I put myself through, God was now able to empty me of me and fill me back up with him. He helped me to get through some rough times where the only one I could hold on to was him. I would never have seen or experienced this kind of love and provision had I not sacrificed 8 months to go and serve this family of which I knew practically nothing about. When you really serve someone sacrificially, it will cost you something. Whether its time or money or resources, it's going to cost you. If you serve someone because you can do it easily, that is good, but how much more rewarding it is to serve sacrificially and see God bless you and provide for you. It's the same principle as giving sacrificially. It was not easy, being in a different country, different culture, no family or friends, no one to talk to that I can relate with. At times, the loneliness was almost too much. But through my sacrifice, I was blessed far beyond what I had given up, because I saw God's provision with his grace, strength, and peace to do the work he called me to do. Through the process of refining by fire, the more suffering I went through, the more character was produced; the more character produced, the more hope there was for me and those around me; and the more I came to see God's love being poured into me through the Holy Spirit. And though what I went through ended within 8 months' time, He has radically changed me for the rest of forever.