

July 26, 2006

The honeymoon's over.

At my very first meeting of the project we've come here to direct, I met my match. Again, it's time to call again on the Strength of the Lord, the "ezekiel" in Hebrew that we named our son after, 'cause Lord, I ain't got it.

I sat in a high school classroom, on splintered desks between walls of graffiti and floor spread of trash, in a cement block building reached only over dirt roads impassible by vehicle on the rainiest days. Half an hour late, the meeting began.

All this I had expected. I've seen developing countries; I can handle decrepit buildings, mud roads, and lax timelines. Like the ants in our kitchen, our brownish water, and our cold bedrooms, I can handle all this until, today, there comes one more thing out of my control, reminding me how hopeless we would be on our own here.

The meeting was a loan repayment meeting for high school students who have started businesses with loans of \$15-75. Some students did well, counting their pennies to make the one or two dollars of weekly payment.

Other students, and I won't say how many, did poorly to say the least.

"How's your business?" Betsy, the staff member we will replace, asked a student.

"Fine." She ran a pen through cracks in the desk.

"How's your profit?"

"Ok." She giggled with the friend sharing her bench.

She was lying. The local staff person had visited students' homes over the weekend and learned that this girl, and others like her, spent every penny of their loan money, some on necessities, but others on treats. They had no businesses left.

Where to go from here?

I opened my Bible last night to the book of Ezekiel, the first few chapters. In a wildly magnificent vision, this guy named Ezekiel meets God. Just when you're getting all excited that God is going to come fix everything in life, God says to Ezekiel, "I'm sending you to a rebellious people." Ezekiel goes off "in bitterness and in the anger of my spirit," and mopes in his house for a week, angry and overwhelmed.

I suppose we all need to sit bummed out over the rebelliousness, the poor choices, of people sometimes. I'm not saying these students are the rebellious ones, or at least not

the only rebellious ones. I think we're all rebellious some of the time, maybe a lot of the time.

But we go on. Ezekiel says, "At the end of seven days the word of the Lord came to me." He goes on to get a lot of crazy instructions, but he does what he's supposed to do.

We have a lot of figuring out to do. There are no easy answers on how to direct this project or how to make a difference in these kids lives.

On a lighter note

By the way, speaking of Ezekiel, our little Zeke is walking on his own now! He toddles around our home proud as punch, usually holding a spoon. When he's not walking he's sitting outside in the biggest dirt piles he can find scooping up dirt with his spoon. Ah, life on the farm.