

Update 8 – written Oct. 21, 2011

*\*Side note up front: this isn't a neatly wrapped up update. Rather it is more a glimpse into a teaching time when the student isn't pulling straight A's.*

“In my experience Christian women tend to emphasize the ‘go out and do’ passages of Scripture more than the ‘be still & know’ parts. We wear our stress like a badge of honor, as if all our activity ‘on God’s behalf is adding up like frequent flier miles.” Lisa Harper

I remember smiling and nodding my head when I first read this. Now it pricks me, a bit too close to the truth. There was no ‘September’s slower pace’ as I forecasted in update 6. It never came. Three days after I returned from the camp for mentally & physically challenged, we held our first clinic after the summer’s break. As I walked up the road toward the church and saw all the people, I started crumbling inside. I knew I didn’t have the strength, wisdom, love or patience that this day was going to require of me. As the team gathered for prayer before we started, tears came.

One hand my tears were from gratitude. I was thrilled that Tanya (who’s daughter Katya died this spring) was once more with us. I was thankful for Pastor Misha and his support for the medical ministry. Having stocked the clinic shelves before I left for camp, I had seen again how God faithfully supplies for this outreach. And, I was just happy to have the gang back together. On the other hand, there were tears of fear. I knew I had little to offer the crowd that waited in the next room and I pleaded to God for help.

Thirty patients later Tanya and I were wiped out but God had indeed been with us and had provided energy, wisdom, love and patience sufficient for the day. At the next clinic there were 20 people and for the past 3 clinics there have been between 15 – 18. Now that they are written down, these numbers don’t look that big. I’m not going to try and explain it as if to convince because unless you’ve experienced it, it is difficult to understand. It’s enough to say that for me/us these are full clinic days but despite how physically and emotionally consuming they are I know for solid sure that I am where I’m supposed to be and doing what I’m supposed to do.

A talk – He had invited me a year ago for me to share with his church. Last Spring when Pastor Sergi (pastor of the Church of Grace here in Feodosia) asked, I was busy preparing for the upcoming summer Vacation Bible Schools. After that I was involved with them all summer and then in September I left for furlough. As I was preparing to return to Ukraine this spring he sent an email gently asking if I remembered his request. But, spring and summer’s hectic pace happened again and Sergi patiently waited until last month to request once more. We set a date.

I knew this was a God appointment but that's all I knew. What am I supposed to say? What do you want me to talk about? I have 1 week to prepare and the slate is empty. Not in a beautiful way but at least with a sincere heart I stormed heaven with prayer. "You got me into this! You want me to do this! Well, now you got to tell me what to do." For 3 days I poured myself into this project and I could tell I was being governed and guided. Then Sunday came.

Even in the states, when I'm asked to share in front of the congregation the trust of the pastor to allow me to share is something I don't take lightly. On their part, I count it as a step of faith, as for me it is an honor and privilege. But in all the years I have been here, this is the first time a national pastor has extended me such a wide invitation. My very first desire was that God be glorified and my second desire was that Pastor Sergi be pleased.

I spoke on our immune system – how amazing God has made it to work and then I wove in spiritual truths as I addressed 5 ways we ruin our immune system and 5 ways we can boost it. It was the first time I've spoken here for 2 hours straight in a presentation setting. So combine the factor of the responsibility of the talk with the fact that I did it all in Russian....I poured myself out that morning. Once again I knew for solid sure that I was where I'm supposed to be and doing what I was supposed to do. And, once again, I came home absolutely exhausted.

School – Perhaps I shouldn't be doing this – adding to an already full schedule. Perhaps I'm doing it for the wrong reasons – is pride the chief reason for wanting to improve? I don't have extra time and yet my mistakes are fewer when I'm taking language lessons so I started school again. If God had called me to Ukraine when I was 4 or if He had gifted me with language things would be different. But as it is I've only got 2 things going for me: stubbornness and a patient teacher. So at 3 hours a week for the next several months, I'm gonna keep digging away that this mountain called Russian – one teaspoon at a time.

So this past month as we have moved from short sleeves to long johns and dust to mud, I've been busy with clinic, school, a presentation, home visits to 2 patients and the 2nd International Christian Medical Conference for students.

It all started with an innocent question – "Where is Ternopil?"

When I was visiting the Zaparoshja Church clinic earlier this year, I heard about this conference. Since I understood that it was going to take place somewhere on the East side of Ukraine (therefore I obviously wouldn't be going) the last of October, I just thought 'God bless 'um!' and didn't give it another thought. That is until our CMF team started planning our team meeting and it was decided it would be in Lviv. That is when went to the map with my 'Where is Ternopil?' question. Turns out it is a neighboring city south of Lviv. That led to asking if I

could register; which led to being asked to give 2 workshops – Prevention of Pressure Ulcers and Caring for a colostomy; which led to being put on the head advisory committee; which led to being in charge of the conference First Aid Station. My goodness all that from one little question!

No seriously, it has been a privilege. It has been like being a part of a God tsunami – something so vastly huge-er than yourself. It turns out that some 10,000 students (mostly from Africa and Asia) come to study medicine here in Ukraine. With nothing similar available, these students started attending the Christian Medical Conference for students – which have happened yearly for the past 3 years. The nuance is that the international students speak English. Long story short, a handful of Christian international medical students have taken it upon themselves (on top of their studies) to put on their own evangelistic/faith building conferences.

Dr. Jim Peipon, a fellow medical missionary in Ukraine wrote - The students are walking through the doors God has opened, doing the work He has planned in advance for them to do. God brought them from 77 different countries to study in Ukraine. God is bringing speakers from 8 countries and 11 Christian organizations to provide an academic and scientific program from a biblical perspective. God is bringing the deans from 4 of the 17 Ukrainian medical institutes to learn about "whole person" medicine: physical, emotional and spiritual. God is broadening the view of pastors from local churches to assist in organizing a pre-conference prayer summit for the medical professions.

While this will be the 2nd conference of its kind, for the first time in the history of Ukraine, a Christian conference is being held on the grounds of the public university. And, although there are a 1,000 asking to come, only 400 will be allowed making it the largest Christian medical conference ever held in Ukraine. On October 29 and 30th, keep us in prayer – for hearts to hear the Gospel, for logistics & safety and for God’s will to be done.

So I started out the update with the quote about –‘wearing our stress like a badge of honor’...due to all our ‘activity ‘on God’s behalf.’ Guilty as charged. Been there. Done that. Activity can also be an idol. It can also be an escape and I have been guilty of these as well. Other times, I think it has more to do with choosing good rather than the best or as Charles Hummel stated, “We live in constant tension between the urgent and the important.” Good but not God priorities. Then there are days like Wednesday.

I woke up with the rain not falling but rather beating at the window. Daylight showed that my whole balcony was leaking and in no small way. I mopped up what I could and then flew off to my first patient. Diabetic with osteomyelitis in her toe. She can’t see it or feel it and she has no money to doing anything if she could. The wound is worsening by the week and this is intensely hard for me to watch. My second patient has Herpes Zoster with infected wounds and she’s in

tremendous pain. My heart ripped as she screams when I remove her bandages. Between the rain and horrendous puddles, I get home totally wet. The clothes washer goes out of order 3 times. Each time means emptying the drum, monkeying with the pump and cleaning up the mess. Even though I say no, my alcoholic neighbor comes to my door several times with one in the same question – would I give him some money? The pipe for my radiator has a leak. I have been asking for help for 2 months. God bless Pastor Misha who took it upon himself to make some calls Tuesday night. I've got to clear the space for the guys coming to look at it tonight. Can they fix it? Will they be able to fix it in time before the pipes are filled back up with water for the start of heating season? Back to the balcony – It stopped raining now. Is it going to rain more today? I don't know. I do know that I am leaving for a 10 day trip in 2 days and if we have another storm even with half the fury of this one my balcony is going to be in bad shape. I spent the rest of the day doing what I could with what I had to arrange a collecting system. I'm furious - with myself, with the man who made the balcony and with Ukraine in general! I hate problems that I can't even come close to solving on my own. [Actual conversation inside my head: What is going on!?! Good grief what did I pray for lately. Oh no, I remember. Isaiah 66:2. "But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word." Sunday I prayed for humility. Crud, what did I do that for!?!]

Like I said at the beginning, the story isn't done. The balcony has a drainage system of sorts – like one you've never seen I'm sure. (Lord help the one who makes even the smallest comment about it because heads are going to roll!) The living room has been prepped for welding repairs –hopefully to be done while I'm gone. My workshops are finalized, my bag is packed and with God's help I had time to even write this today. I get up at 3 to leave at 4 to be at the airport by 6 for my 7am flight. Lord willing, I will be in Lviv at 11. Our team meeting will be Saturday to Wednesday. On Thursday I will meet up with the vice president of the International Christian Nursing Association from Norway and we will head to the medical conference together. On November 1, I'll meet Cory & Janice Lemke in Kiev and we'll fly to Crimea.

Am I doing it right? I don't know. I'm only a student. I'm just gonna just keep on praying that God would guide and govern me and that He would also help me to trust, obey and be humble enough to be guided and governable. *June*