

Offensive Briefing #10

Collaboration Testimonies

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As a follow-up to the last **Offensive Briefing**, following are a few testimonies that we've received over the last few months that include examples of successful collaboration. These have varying degrees of details regarding the collaboration or the lessons learned through it, but I find it very inspiring to see the variety of opportunities that the Lord uses to give a witness, get out the message, provide our needs, and multiply our efforts. We know there are many more such opportunities arising every day, and that the Lord will continue to bring new avenues your way in the future to help you to expand your flocks and build fruitful, long-lasting works.

Love, Peter

Exchange Student Volunteering

*From Maria, La Posada Home,
Buenos Aires, Argentina*

2. We are experiencing another situation of collaboration and alliance in our Home. This opportunity came up rather unexpectedly and is something we hadn't planned for nor envisioned in our Offensive strategy plan. To backtrack a little, during the last days of November 2008, we received an e-mail from an Argentine woman explaining that she represented a German university near Munich (Hochschule Augsburg), and that her students were interested in volunteering in our programs. We contacted her and set up an appointment during the first days of December.

3. At this meeting, she introduced us to her partner (a German woman) and the project they were developing. They were in the final stages of putting together a program for exchange students who want

to learn Spanish and eventually apply to an Argentine university. This program included volunteering in Buenos Aires, so they had been looking for NGOs that provided volunteering opportunities. In business terms, they were opening a company that offers travel/education exchanges to German universities as package deals, including Spanish lessons, university enrollment, lodging, tourism, volunteering, etc. This was going to be their first experience, and they had a group of 13 university students with one teacher arriving in Buenos Aires mid-February to stay for a month.

4. We showed them our programs, the type of volunteering we could offer, told them about our Christian beliefs and the role of them in our programs, and our spiritual training workshops. Religion and volunteering usually don't mingle in this kind of deal, since volunteering is generally looked upon from a purely social-humanitarian standpoint. These types of intermediaries frown on religious organizations in order to keep their clients "safe" from any type of imposed proselytizing or evangelism. The Lord led us to place an emphasis on humans' need for spiritual input, and how [humanitarian work] must go hand in hand with spiritual training in order to truly affect people's lives.

5. The Lord had the right people set up for this opportunity. Both women are around 35 years old, and both received the witness and liked the idea of their students receiving spiritual training through our workshops. They shared with us how they have noticed that European youth are becoming more and more materialistic and superficial, and how they've seen a lack of spiritual values in Germany. We clarified that attending the first two workshops was a requirement for our volunteers, and that the third one, based on Jesus' life on Earth, was optional.

6. We also discussed the cost. This was something new for us, since we had never charged for volunteering before. But we had also experienced

that free volunteering generated a lack of commitment and lack of long-term participation. We had done a little research beforehand and had a general idea of costs, which came in very handy. Both parties agreed that we would evaluate an alliance and get back in touch as soon as possible.

7. This was a step of faith for us, because we were quite busy already with our Christmas push, and it didn't look like we could take on a new project at the time. Weeks passed, and it became impossible to find the time to pray and counsel about this proposal until the first days of 2009. We later discovered that they had gone ahead "by faith" and included us in their program without even receiving a proposal or details of activities or costs from us.

8. After receiving confirmation from the Lord to go ahead with this project, we got in touch with them and started working on a proposal for a month of volunteering. This became a major undertaking, because even though the Lord had confirmed that we should go through this open door, we had a lot on our plate in January (a big charitable project with the Rotary Club, renting a new house, financial pressure, and many Home members gone visiting relatives). We also realized that this month of volunteering would happen when two of our regular charitable/volunteering-type programs would be on hold because of summer vacations, so we had to put together new activities for [our student volunteers]. After much work we sent them a proposal which included:

- 1 introductory meeting
- 8 volunteering visits at various locations
- 1 volunteering trip to a nearby town
- 1 ballooning class
- 2 workshops
- *Mundo Mejor* (Better World) T-shirts
- Participation certificates
- Goodbye dinner at the Home

9. We counseled a lot with one of our A-MMs who runs a successful NGO and works mainly with foreign students who volunteer. She gave us insight and counsel on the business side of it (for example,

making a contract, stating on the contract that we are receiving their pay in the form of a donation toward our work, etc.) and potential pitfalls. This was very needed and helpful, especially since this would be our first experience with this type of project.

10. More than a month later we met up with these women again (only two weeks before the students' arrival) and closed the deal. They presented some changes to the program that benefited us, and agreed to the cost per student that we presented. They had told us via e-mail that only six of their students were going to participate, so we prepared the program for that number. But after they had received our proposal, they liked it so much that they decided to make it a requirement for all 13 students to participate. This meant some work expanding the program a bit, but it also meant a much larger income than we had expected.

11. The religious aspect of our volunteering came up again, which the Lord had prepared us for. During the introductory meeting, we noticed that they were still a bit nervous about this, because even though they liked the idea, they were dealing with a university. This led us to explain to them more about witnessing and how we share Jesus [with people] on a personal level without getting into sermons and indoctrination.

12. **Update:** Now that we have completed the month of activities, we have a better understanding of this experience. We are thankful for this opportunity, and we have learned a lot in both practical and spiritual aspects. I'll describe the things we've experienced in point form.

13. **Religion in volunteering:** We faced some opposition from the teacher, who didn't like the fact that Christianity was present in the program. We had included a statement in the contract that explained that we would not evangelize the students during the program, but we also stated that sharing our faith and beliefs would take place on a personal level with students who were interested. Some of the activities included prayer, and the workshops

were the “spiritual training” part of the program and were conducted according to the program. Nevertheless, there were constant complaints from the teacher about it.

14. On the last day, the students were invited to the Home for a goodbye dinner, and only eight of them attended. The coordinators had told us that the other students were tired, etc., but the ones who came explained that the day before they had held a debate about us, our beliefs, our calling as missionaries, and the Family, and that the other five students didn’t come because they didn’t like the fact that we were Christians. [The ones who did come] told us that, to the contrary, what made us different from regular volunteers was that we were missionaries and active Christians.

15. The closing dinner was a perfect environment to give them an even deeper witness. There were three boys who were particularly interested, and we continue to follow up on them by e-mail. One of them even told us that after this experience he was considering doing this for a more extended period of time. Even though all of them had an opportunity to receive a witness, the Lord had prepared the way for those eight students to receive more of Him. Later, while reviewing the program, we noticed that the five students who “didn’t like us” were originally going to be the only ones who volunteered. The Lord made sure that the right ones would also have the chance to meet Him.

16. This program tested our convictions, as it would have been easy to have set the heavier witness aside in favor of the program and the funds it generated. We faced times when we had to keep reminding the coordinators that we would continue sharing our faith with the students despite the teacher’s opinions, and that we felt it filled a need in the students’ lives. Witnessing through volunteering can be a little tricky, but it has its benefits, because volunteers can see Christianity put into action through the activities.

17. The importance of details: We made a mistake while finalizing the contract as to what was included in the fee per student and what was to be

charged extra for activities (for example, lodging accommodations during the volunteering trip). We had to pay for that mistake at the end of the program. We had booked campground accommodations over the phone and hadn’t checked the state of the cabins, which turned out to be in quite bad shape and caused many complaints. We ended up having to pay a refund for the cabins. Had we checked our contract more closely, we would have noticed the mistake; and if we had checked the cabins and made sure they were in good shape, they would’ve overlooked the lodging expense. It was a good lesson on the importance of details and how they make the difference in our professionalism.

18. Privacy laws: We were so concerned about documenting every activity that we took too many photos of the students, and that—coupled with the teacher’s opposition—brought us to an uncomfortable point with some of the students. After counsel with the coordinators, we decided to write a disclaimer on the photographs taken during the program, stating which ones could and could not be given to them. We had all the students and coordinators from both parties sign it. Again it was a lesson on professionalism, since we should’ve done some research on international privacy laws and taken action accordingly before putting the students in an uncomfortable position.

19. Hands-on training: We had to learn as we went, since we had never done something so “professional” before. As we counseled as a Home and sought the Lord at each step, we learned what we needed to do the job, especially the part of putting it all on paper and negotiating with the coordinators. This is one of the greatest benefits we have received from this experience: learning how to put ideas, humanitarian efforts, our witness, fundraising, etc., into projects that can be appealing and professional. Counseling was an important part of this project; it was a teamwork effort.

20. After we ended the month of activities and the students had flown back to Germany, we met

with the coordinators to evaluate the program. The end result was more than positive for everyone. The Lord's Spirit pervaded and the witness that was given ended up being the highlight of the students' reactions. Now we need to pray and evaluate if this is the direction that the Lord has for our Home before we accept the next batch of students. The Lord is bringing many new opportunities our way, and as we follow His leading, we'll find the much desired fruit of the Offensive.

Tuning in to the Needs of Our Supporters

From Paul, Japan

21. I recently learned a lesson along the lines of being more aware of our Active members' needs and being willing to take the time to meet their needs—not just their spiritual needs, but their physical ones as well; being open to doing things that will be a blessing to them, even if it won't necessarily benefit us directly. The Lord blesses it in the long run.

22. Our Home has an Active member who has been a good supporter over the years. She has donated different things to us—very expensive items like new vehicles and a truck for provisioning. However, this AM began having some financial difficulties a few years ago. We weren't aware of her financial difficulties and she didn't tell us about them, as Japanese people don't usually voice their needs or financial difficulties. She had continued giving to us, even to her own hurt. This caused some friction between our Active member and her grown daughter, as her daughter couldn't understand how or why her mother was giving to “this religious group.”

23. We weren't aware of what our dear Active member was going through at the time. We saw her as a supporter. When it came to financial or physical needs, we always saw her as the “giver” and us as the “receivers.” We would give her Bible classes and minister to her spiritually; that was our role. Then, in return, she would give us financial support. But things don't always play out that way, and there are times when we find

that those who faithfully give to us need some help from us too.

24. Things don't always go so smoothly for our friends. The rich man isn't always rich and business isn't always good, and when that happens, people often encounter family difficulties as well, as the daughter and mother did in this case. Even though this woman's business was not going well, she continued to give to us, until it got to the point that she couldn't even afford to pay her utility bills. At that point, her daughter stepped in and forced her to stop supporting the Family and took more control over her financial state and the care of her houses.

25. We realized that we were at fault, in a way, as we were not aware of or concerned enough for her welfare. Sad to say, we had a very shallow understanding of what our dear Active member was going through and we weren't aware of the difficulties that she was facing.

26. Recently, the Letter “Spirit Helpers and Hinderers, Part 4” revealed the spirit helper named Justus Ukon Takayama, who helps us understand the hearts of top people. So we called on him to help us to understand this woman's heart better. We then went to her house, and for the first time, she poured out her heart to us and told us of the very difficult time she was having in business and with her daughter. We had no idea how difficult it actually was, as she was always smiling, even when she went through difficulties at home and in her business.

27. When we asked the Lord what we could do for this woman, He led us to help her fix the veranda on her summer cottage, which she couldn't afford because of her poor financial state. We communicated with another Home that had more handymen, and worked together with them to begin repairing her house. It was no small repair, and actually involved rebuilding part of the outside of the house, other repairs, clearing the property, etc. A team of 14 people was involved in this project and stayed in her house for two weeks to get it done, an average of 7 people per day.

28. We didn't request money for our work. We felt we owed it to her to do it as a free service for her benefit, since she had been such a big support to us over the years and was now going through difficult times. We hoped that it would also [be a testimony to the daughter that we cared about her mom and that this would] help her to win her daughter's trust again.

29. When her daughter heard about the work that we were doing for her mother free of charge, she was very touched, and she ended up insisting on paying us a good sum of money for our work, which turned out to be a substantial donation for both Homes that we didn't expect. In the end, what we had offered to do free of charge turned out to be quite profitable for us financially. And we gained the good will of this woman's daughter.

30. They were so happy with our work. The daughter was impressed with how the veranda was so beautifully and professionally redone by our team of handymen. The bond of trust between us has been strengthened and now both mother and daughter open their hearts to us more.

31. They have another house in a famous resort town, and they are asking us to look into how we can improve that house. They told us that in the past they'd hired professional caretakers for their houses, but they were often deceived and betrayed. So they were glad they found us—honest and hard-working individuals who are concerned about their interests. Of course, they're not asking us to do it for free; they're very concerned about our needs too, since they know we are doing missionary work.

32. I am very happy the Lord led us this way. It was a good lesson about being humble and willing to do our part to change and be more of a servant to the dear supporter that the Lord has given us.

Our Miracle Home

*From Joanna and Francis,
Mendoza Mountain Home, Argentina*

33. Jesus did something amazing for us as a Home. For over two years, the institution from whom we are renting has had our house up for sale. When the house first went up for sale, the Lord showed

us to ask a friend and supporter who lives in the States, whom we had witnessed to while he was living here in Mendoza, for help. This friend had some land here, and the Lord showed us to suggest to him that he could sell his land, which was a bit far away and undeveloped, and buy our property, and we could rent from him. He agreed, but wanted to have the property in our name as well.

34. For over two years we've had to face lawyers, notaries, and related people and problems. People did all they could to cheat our friend out of as much money as possible, and delayed the sale of the land to the point that our friend thought that perhaps it wasn't the Lord's will for us to have the place.

35. I could go into more details of how difficult it has been to make this transaction, but the most important part is that after two years and many prayers and lessons, we signed for the house and made the first transfer of money from the sale of our friend's property for the down payment. ... As of now, this house (with six bedrooms) on about seven acres is technically ours for the Lord's work!

36. You, Mama and Peter, have always had the faith that the Lord would supply for us and that He would make us a financial force. I don't know many people who can walk into an office, and, without a mortgage, buy a large house and property, as we did. But that's exactly what's happened. All praise to Him and His mighty keys!

37. When you know what an isolated and faraway Home we are, and how we sometimes miss fellowship and the wonderful fruits of being near other brethren in bigger cities, and how we're sometimes tempted to feel a bit forgotten or out of the big picture, you can imagine how touched and humbled we feel to see how the Lord has never forgotten us and how well He cares for us.

38. Here's one of the mighty keys we used a lot in this fight: "The gift of greater faith is yours through the power of the keys—faith that is not afraid of doing things that are different, faith that will walk through doors and claim the land, faith that will truly stand any test."

Documenting Relief Efforts, Collaboration with a Catholic Order, Building a Country Presence

From Ruth, India

39. One of the subjects of our earliest CCR board meetings was how to promote the name of the Family in India. The Indian Homes are active with good works and have high witnessing stats. From time to time there have been major disasters in India, and the Homes have responded. Previously, this response was not well documented, and since it was often carried out by a single Home or team, the response tended to be somewhat sporadic and spontaneous. At times, a few Homes would get together to participate in an event or an activity, but a lack of consistent professional documentation was still a challenge. People do a lot of witnessing and have projects, but because they are so busy, they just don't get around to documenting these activities well, or if they do, this documentation isn't always added to the region's collective portfolio.

40. The Asian tsunami took place on December 26, 2004. Relief workers weren't allowed into the most affected areas by the government for the first two or three days due to the massive damage and destruction. There were deaths and extensive damage, and initially, only major government-recognized agencies were allowed in. Shortly after the disaster, other well-funded relief agencies were allowed to participate, but smaller groups like ours had difficulties in getting into the main affected sites. There was a lot of red tape.

41. We happened to have an RC meeting scheduled shortly after the tsunami, and the topic of the tsunami came up in our discussions, and how this time our response to the need could be a united, well-orchestrated effort with the Homes working together. We discussed how it could be so much more effective than in the past when every Home just focused on their own individual effort. The RC had the vision and that helped the Homes, as well as our board, to catch it as well, and to see how we could establish the Family's presence with a united effort.

42. It just wasn't impressive enough on a national scale to have every Home doing their little part and having their individual Home names on their projects without clearly showing that it was all part of the Family. People would ask, "Who is the Family? Oh, you're Family Services, you're Family Education, you're Family Vision," and it had been confusing to establish our identity in the country.

43. As a board, we began praying about how we could help. One of the first things the Lord showed us to do was to start approaching officials we knew, getting letters of recommendation for the Family in India showing that we were a bona fide organization and that it would be good to allow us entrance into the disaster area.

44. We approached some officials and got recommendation letters for the teams that wanted to work at the tsunami-affected sites. In the south, we got a referral from an official who was leading the relief effort. Our team went and met this particular woman and invited her to an event that they were holding in a village for children who had been traumatized by the disaster. Some of them had lost parents and there had been a very sad, depressing atmosphere in this village. Family teams set up a fairground with sports activities and entertainment for the children.

45. When this woman came to this event, she talked to some of the villagers to find out how they felt about it. Some of them said that it was the first time they had heard laughter since the disaster, and that it was so good to see the children having fun and behaving like children. The official seemed very touched and began talking to others in the government and the media about the Family and our efforts. "Everybody is giving clothes and food," she said, "but they're not concentrating on the real damage—the spiritual and emotional damage to people who have lost loved ones, homes, and livelihood." She did a video interview for us in which she expressed her appreciation for our efforts and highly recommended our work at the tsunami-affected site. We sent this video around to the government agencies that were overseeing

the relief effort, and it carried a lot of weight. This footage created credibility with donors as well, and we received more donations for rehab work.

46. Through this official, we were able to get a foot in the door and get permission to undertake larger projects in more villages. In the beginning, the main need was for relief supplies, so we approached donors for food, clothing, toiletries, and medical supplies.

47. With time, we were able to do more solid and long-lasting work, as the Lord opened the door to get the official permissions that were needed. This lady's recommendation and recognition of the Family's contribution in the effort opened the door for us to be able to do much more than distribute relief supplies.

48. We went on to various kinds of projects, such as programs for children, grief counseling, teachers' training seminars, placing our materials in schools, and restoring livelihoods by donating fishing boats. There was a whole village of workers that just repaired boats. They'd lost all their tools, so we gave them tools. We also assisted in desalinating agricultural land and building houses, schools, community halls, libraries, etc. So our work went from relief distribution to building structures, schools, etc. The tsunami work went on from 2004 up until August 2008, when the last project, rebuilding a school, was completed.

49. Another service that the CCR board helped provide at this time was to help document the Homes' tsunami relief and rehabilitation efforts in a way that tied it to the Family in India. We planned to have regular updates written and sent out to the Homes so that they could in turn use them to keep their donors, supporters, and friends well informed. We asked the Homes working on the disaster relief if they would like all their efforts documented in the form of regular updates under the banner of The Family India, and they all liked the idea. So we asked the teams to send us photographs and write-ups, with no requirement for perfect presentation or grammar, and we'd work on polishing these reports and compiling them into an update which was sent to all the Homes in the region.

50. Sometimes teams didn't have access to the Internet, so they'd just call and say, "This and that happened this week." We had one person on our board who worked on gathering all that information, writing it up, and sending weekly news and updates with photos to all the Family Homes in India. These updates were sent out by the Homes to all their contacts. They went to government officials, to the police, to top lawyers and city fathers, to the media, and to everyone on our mailing list.

51. All over the country, the same update from The Family India was going out to everybody the Family was in contact with—sponsors, donors, friends, etc. It was a challenge and took work to keep this going every week to ten days, because documentation was not a strong point, and the Homes were in the middle of this busy project with personnel away at the disaster sites. Nevertheless, we were able to send out weekly or fortnightly updates for about eight months. Long after the tsunami was no longer news, we were still sending out updates because our work continued there.

52. One reason we could sustain a consistent and long-lasting work was because a couple of Homes were very dedicated and had a long-term vision. The Lord also raised up an effective partnership with a grassroots organization working in the area run by a Catholic order. These people live a simple, humble lifestyle, and they work in the rural part of India in the area where the tsunami had struck. They knew the people, the local language, and the area very well; they knew the location and features of various villages, how to get there, what the employment opportunities were, what the people did for their livelihood, etc. So we formed a partnership with them, and it turned out to be a very successful partnership that has carried on to the present. Our strong point was in raising the sponsorship and theirs was in being hands-on with the projects.

53. Because we were sending out updates regularly, we started getting corporate sponsorships, including offers from people who hadn't been

very open to giving to us at first. When there is a disaster, Indians usually donate through the Prime Minister's Relief Fund or through the Red Cross and other established agencies. But then some people and companies that had declined to work through us in the beginning started contacting us after a few months, saying, "We'd like to support you. We've collected X amount of money from our employees and we'd like to send it through the Family because we can see you're doing real work and making a difference." So the updates had solid results in gaining us credibility and increased support.

54. Working with this Catholic group turned out to be a valuable partnership. We raised the funds and identified the areas where we would work or invest those funds, and sometimes the donors would designate it toward a school, or building houses, or conducting teachers' training programs, or sponsorship of sets of the Family's audio/visual materials. So we identified the projects, raised the funds, and the Catholic group worked on the implementation. They would hire the contractors and oversee the building projects, and were very faithful and diligent with the various projects.

55. We worked there and undertook projects for quite a few years. For the first eight months, we sent updates every week or every couple of weeks. Then we sent updates every month, or when a specific project was completed. We compiled all the updates and documented everything that we had done in the tsunami relief and rehabilitation into a comprehensive spiral-bound report. This became a useful tool to give to various government departments and the media—anyone who would enquire about us. This documentation helped to give the Family in India credibility and presence, and we became known as "the people who did the tsunami relief work."

56. One of our goals has been to continue to "brand-build" the name of the Family in India, which is "The Family India." The Lord showed us a couple of ways we could do this. One way was to try to get positive media coverage under

the Family India banner for certain things that Homes all over the country do. For example, most of the Homes work with underprivileged children. This is a needy area, and it's a good appeal project as well.

57. On Children's Day, which is celebrated in India on November 14, almost every Home or Homes in a city holds some event for underprivileged children. So we decided to write up all our press notes and description of the event under "The Family India." For example, a press note could read, "The Family India is celebrating Children's Day in Delhi, Mumbai, and Bangalore, to benefit 10,000 underprivileged children who will enjoy a memorable day of games, snacks, rides and gifts!"—in order to make it larger than each individual Home's activity. We had never done it that way before, but it's worked well because the media has picked up on it, and any articles published about us were highlighting our work in the country rather than just one Home or city's work.

58. We have a project in Delhi in Asia's largest prison, and we've been working with them for about 15 years now. The prison work has opened up a lot of opportunities for us to meet people, such as government officials, as they're very interested in conditions in the prison. The prison administration comes under the government. The Human Rights Commission of India takes a lot of interest in the prison workings. A number of times they have asked us to do seminars for the prison staff on anger management and stress management, as that alleviates human rights abuses in the prison. Ministering to prisoners is inspiring, but our presence there has led into these other areas with the government and training the prison staff, which has gained us recognition. The prison compiles a yearly report on the work done by humanitarian organizations, and this report gets disseminated to all the central government departments. This also lends our work a lot of credibility.

59. What we've learned from these situations is that there are charitable projects and disaster relief and rehab projects which present needs that we can fill. I don't like to call them "opportunities,"

because disaster relief isn't really an opportunity; if anything, it is a time to serve. But they can be steppingstones for us to make a difference, to do proactive work, and to build a presence for the Family, which as a result puts us in a position to do even more for the country in the future.

Opportunities for Collaboration

*From Maria, La Posada Home,
Buenos Aires, Argentina*

60. In some of the prophecies the Lord had given our Home about the Offensive, He had mentioned that it was important that we "listen and learn" from the professionals and labor leaders that He would lead us to meet. Within a few months of the Offensive we met more influential people than we had in several years, and we've had to do exactly what the Lord showed us: listen and learn. Some of these people have taken us under their wing, and they feel that one way of helping us is by teaching us the tricks of the trade that open the right doors in the corporate world. We have gleaned many helpful tips, and one of them is that collaboration and alliances provide mutual benefit. We've had a few experiences along these lines recently:

61. ▶ An NGO of hospital clown volunteers from Italy contacted us via e-mail because they had received a brochure of our work, which includes a short description of our hospital project and other projects. A friend of theirs had received the brochure while visiting Argentina and had passed it on to them. We organized an event together in Buenos Aires, and seven of their volunteers flew in to participate. The Lord used us to show them another side of laughter therapy and hospital visitation, which includes Jesus, prayer, and giving people the Word through our Family products. Some of them were very interested in prayer and how that could help the children, and it was also a great opportunity to witness to them and get them saved. It also gave us positive PR with the board of directors of the hospital.

62. ▶ One of our A-MMs runs an important NGO in the city, with many volunteers from abroad. One month she was holding a big event for Children's Day at a park, and the Lord led us to offer to help at the event. It was a blessing that we did, because we were able to work hand in hand with her, help her with organization and people-handling skills, and offer our leadership abilities. It also helped her to feel more a part of the Home and like we have a joint work for the Lord through different avenues and projects. It also gave us a chance to witness to the young people who were volunteering for her NGO. At the end of the day she gave us a large donation that we weren't expecting. It was also a great opportunity to get good photographic and written documentation that we wouldn't have otherwise, since we don't organize these types of events.

63. ▶ A few weeks ago we had an appointment with the director of a PR company in one of the wealthiest areas of the city. She gave us a variety of information on different top people and companies, and asked us if we were interested in tapping into mutual benefit alliances. She told us that the president of the Woman's Rotary Club in that area was opening a new surgery room in the local hospital and gave us her cell phone number and a "You know what to do, right?" wink. I called this woman a few days later and introduced myself. I explained that we had heard about the needs of that hospital and how they were opening a new surgery room. I also presented our laughter therapy program, and mentioned that it would be an opportunity to do something together. She liked the idea right away, asked us for a meeting the following week, and invited us to dinner with them. Our roles were reversed, in that this time it wasn't us asking for an appointment; she was asking us. Calling this woman would have been a different story had we not known this information.

64. ▶ Some time ago we met the director of a publicity company while doing a puppet

show, and exchanged business cards. A few weeks later he called us, asking us to come by his office because he wanted to talk about some jingles. We didn't know exactly what he would ask us, but when we prayed about this visit, the Lord showed us to be open to new ideas we would have said no to in the past.

65. When we presented our work and our professional services, like our singing team, educational shows, etc., he was hooked on them right away and asked us if we were interested in a collaboration alliance. He explained that it would be beneficial for his company to have us in his portfolio, since we looked fresh and innovative, and publicity is all about having the newest “products” to offer before anyone else. He wouldn't demand a fee if someone hired us for a social event, for example, but he would get credit for having our names in his portfolio; it would also be a way of helping our work, since his company does publicity for the top companies in the city.

66. Another way we could collaborate would be through singing jingles, for example. He would save time by not having to hold try-outs for singers, but would have us in his portfolio and would pay us for it. We have the right to evaluate it each time he needs us to sing for a jingle or advertisement, so there isn't a definite commitment to each project on either side, but just a collaboration agreement. The benefit to us is that he personally knows the top people we need to reach, and he offered to introduce us to people he knows and to organize the meetings for us. He also ended up being very receptive to our message! Had we not been open to new ideas, we might not have followed up on this opportunity.

67. ▶ One of our goals for the Offensive is to be able to bring Argentine volunteers into our volunteer program at a children's hospital, as it has proven to be of interest to young people. In past years, most of the volunteers were foreigners who were visiting or studying in

the city. With the Offensive kicking in, and the Lord's promises, and our spirit helpers working on our behalf, we are beginning to see how the Lord is helping us to reach our goals. For the past months our hospital volunteering team has been composed mostly of Argentine middle- to high-class university students. They are very connected to the project and have been active in bringing their friends to participate too. The Lord is starting to open new doors to reach the youth of this country, and the future looks very bright!

Stepping Out: Building an Auditorium

From Chris, Mexico

68. In May, because of the swine flu outbreak, we were only able to operate our *Comedor Infantil* (children's cafeteria) for 14 days, during which time we served 1,140 meals to children, way below our usual average of 2,000 monthly, and 120 meals to senior citizens. Our Children's Day celebration was postponed for the same reason, though when the event finally took place, we served 500 hotdogs and 130 liters of drinks. Many of our friends not only sponsored the event, but also personally participated in it.

69. Applying the principle that the boat has to be in motion before the rudder can take effect, we have also stepped out and begun construction on Phase 1—a multi-purpose auditorium for 300 persons. This is our building project at the Community Center in Las Pintitas, from which we serve the local community with a daily *Comedor* for poor children and senior citizens, and as a distribution center of goods and services to the needy.

70. A friend and avid supporter, whom we met provisioning years ago, initially encouraged us to buy the property. He offered to give us \$25,000, which was a bit shy of half of its cost, and challenged us to raise the rest, which we decided to do. In our next meeting with our enthusiastic and generous Active members, we easily raised another \$20,000. The remaining \$13,000 came in through a grant we applied for.

71. We say “stepping out,” as this is what we have often had to do when no clear means of financing, except reliance on the Lord, was in sight. With no cash on hand, by faith, we hired some workers to begin work the following week.

72. No sooner had we done that than the Lord raised up an architect who became interested in our work. He drew up the plans and bought the first batch of steel and cement for the foundation, assigned an engineer to oversee the project, and partly covers the salary of his workers to do the job. He has also assigned an engineer to oversee the project until it is completed. We have had no need to employ the ones we had previously hired by faith.

73. Almost immediately after we met this architect, and before the workers could begin work, we received an invitation to meet with the president of a branch of the Rotary Club, whose wife is a 12 FS student of one of our AMs. Over coffee the couple offered quite a large donation, enough for materials and four weeks of salary for the workers we had already hired, and promised to furnish the auditorium. The Rotary Club has also asked us for an appointment to tour the project with the intention to adopt it, meaning they would assist us as much as they can toward its completion.

74. As the quote says: “You shouldn’t be afraid to ... start something new, when the Lord is clearly leading you to do so!” As we speak, the foundation is being laid and we have some materials to continue with the building of the basic structure. We are certain that as we continue “attempting big things for God”—with the emphasis on “attempting”—He will bring in the rest that is needed, and the funds with which to pay the workers. We are often reminded of the quote, “Let’s make room for God to work by not looking at the condition of our vessels!”

“Men of faith climb unscaled walls, and they sail uncharted seas;
They dare to cross convention’s bounds, to set the captives free!”

Jewels from HIM #4

From “History In the Making” (Mama Online)

By Maria

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Good, Better, Best

8/09

Following are excerpts of a talk Peter originally gave to leadership during Summit 2008. It applies very much, however, to your Homes and goals and mission-related priorities. There will always be more to do than we can get done. The best we can do is ask the Lord to help us to choose our priorities wisely, so that our efforts are invested where it really counts.

(Peter:) When you meet as a body and you start discussing various ideas, you have to think realistically about who can follow through on the decisions you make and how. Sometimes you have to decide that you can’t do something, even something that’s very good and seems like it would be beneficial, because there’s no one who can take it on, or you can’t do it right then.

It’s very important that you discuss things with open hearts and minds, praying and hearing from the Lord, but also factoring in reality. Not just, “I really want to do this, or this sounds good; therefore it’s what we’re going to do.” You have to think about what you actually can do.

We have to do that with decisions about our work all the time. We have 100 things that would be great to do—except no one can do them because there’s no time, because there are other things that are more important to do or to get out to the Family.

You have to talk about this sometimes, and factor that in when you’re discussing and making decisions, and sometimes you have to make the hard call that you just can’t do something right now. It might be a great idea, it would help, it would be dynamic, but it’s not possible; there’s something else that you have to do, or put your time or energy or resources toward. It’s not popular to say “no” or to have to shelve a good idea or project, but you simply can’t do everything, and, often, something has to get cut, or at least for the time being. There’s no crime in that.

In looking at your [Home’s] needs [and your mission-related goals] and what you’re going to focus

on, you have to get together with open minds and hearts and real prayerfulness, letting go of agendas, and trying to find out: What is best, and how do we accomplish it? Sometimes there is a great idea or something nice to do, but you have other fish to fry that are more important and you can't do both. So you have to make a choice.

From time to time you have to ask yourselves: "Are we using our time in the best way?" There is always too much to do; there always will be. For most of you, there will never be a time when you're completely "caught up." Because even if you "catch up," you're the kind of people who think of new ideas. That's natural. That's good. Except that you have to judge and evaluate, "Well, is what I'm doing really the best use of my time? Is what we're doing the best use of our time and resources? We could be doing something that's really good, but is it the best?"

We've all heard the old adage, "Good, better, best" ... but in this day and age, with the time that we have, there isn't "good, better, best." There's only best. There's no time for the good and the better, because we just don't have the time to do second-rate stuff. Not that the good isn't good and the better isn't better, but the only thing that we have time for is what's best.

If we're all doing that, we're going to see more creativity and fresh ideas that get us to where we want to go, and more quickly than before. We're going to see more change and progress that is significant and that lasts.

Sometimes you have to put forth big effort and make big investments to reap big results. But if you know that, "Yes, it's a big investment, but it's going to be worth it, because it's what will help us to achieve what's best," then even if it does take a big investment of your time or resources, it fits the bill, because you're doing what's best. But I don't think we've always hit the mark in selecting and focusing on doing the best. Sometimes you do a lot of work for something that's very good, but if it's not the best, then it's really not good enough.

Be realistic. You need a healthy dose of realism, as well as a healthy dose of faith. It takes both. There is the God factor, and we can't forget that, but there's

also wisdom and reality. You need both. You have to get ahold of the Lord and focus on what's best, and let the good and better go, because we don't have time for it right now. Maybe later in the future we will, but probably not, because by the time we get to the future, there will be something else that's "best."

And "best" doesn't mean perfect. "Best" doesn't mean a walk in the park, or no challenges or tests or attacks of the Enemy or setbacks along the way. "Best" also doesn't mean the most elaborate and complicated approach or solution you can come up with. Sometimes meeting the most urgent need in "the best way possible" means taking the simplest, bare-bones, no-frills route.

You really have to isolate, with the Lord's help and through discussion together, what the most important things you need to focus on are, what the goal of giving your attention to that problem or need is, and how to achieve the desired outcome, or as close to it as possible, in the simplest, most organized, and streamlined way.

"Simple, organized, and streamlined" doesn't necessarily mean no or little hard work, or not giving the matter much time or thought or prayer. It just means that you don't get sidetracked or top-heavy with other ideas that are "good" or "better," but like in Dad's dream of "Builders Beware," will result in your structure toppling, because you end up overextending yourselves or others, or overdoing and taking on more than is necessary.

We say, "Don't settle for anything less than the best," but I wonder how much we—myself included—actually do that as much as we should. As we let the Lord help us to change and to take on new mindsets and a more professional approach, let's keep this important factor in mind, "Is it best? And if not, what is? How do we do what's best?"

Finding and doing "the best" in our work for the Lord is all that we have time for if we hope to realistically accomplish the most important things, without coming apart at the seams or missing the mark.

So run your decisions, plans, projects, ideas, and goals by the touchstone of good, better, best, and let's aim for "best."