

RWANDA

After traveling to the other side of the world and back, I wanted to take a few moments to reconsider what we experienced. Before moving back into our normal routine of life, I was hoping to stop for a moment and reflect on the opportunity that was given to us from so many different facets—society, humanity, influence, spirituality, justice, community, grace, history and opportunity.

Genocide.

Walking through one memorial, every single person broke down into tears. It was horrific, but it didn't seem real until we heard a personal story from a survivor. Then it moved from a museum or a movie to real life. My heart will forever be ashamed and hurt for what happened to some of the most beautiful people and children I have ever met. Yet at the same time, I have never seen or heard more powerful stories of restoration. We experienced an overwhelming environment of forgiveness that we may never see again in our lifetimes. The Rwandan people can forgive each other for the killings of friends and families, and we can't get over an argument in our marriages. How can we integrate that fragrance into the souls of our personal lives?

Grace and love ultimately will win.

Clean Water.

We saw a child that pumped the well, balanced the tin of water on his head, and then posed for us to take pictures. He is only one who gains. From that one well alone, there are 2,999 others that smile just like him everyday. That was one of the proudest and most humbling moments of my life. We saw how the simplest modern convenience can change the health and hope of an entire village. This is so simple, yet changing humanity. What if today we worked to give everyone in the entire world an opportunity to have access to clean water? Can't you imagine the smile on that child's face multiplied by millions of different smiles from all over the world?

A small offering has the ability to change a society.

Micro-Enterprise.

We witnessed many successful micro-financing projects. From an environmentally sustainable Sunflower Project to the generous women leading the Soap Project, there is no doubt that my mind was stimulated by the possibilities and importance of micro-enterprise in re-enabling and establishing the economy of third-world cultures.

Investing in Micro-Finance is a sustaining solution to poverty issues.

Church.

Taking a ride with Bishop Kolini was a lesson in understanding the role of the Church in every culture. His self-defined personal role was to, "Reclaim the land as sacred and share the Gospel story of Grace with all." He does that in two very distinctive ways. First, he is loving and serving the people by addressing the social and physical needs of the community. Second, he is preaching the need to understand justice and believe that grace is sufficient. There is no doubt the American Church can learn endless examples of how to live out the Gospel from his example.

There are living leaders in the Church to learn from today.

Community.

In Rwanda, people know how to live in community. That is why they can forgive ... they must forgive because they are dependant on each other for ultimate survival. Everything is done in community and everyone has a role to play. Even 3-year olds, work and take part in the family. I have never been that dependant on others. For us to redeem the idea of community in our culture, we have much to learn from a pre-modern society.

We were created to live in community.

President Kagame.

It occurred to me as we were in the room with President Kagame that we could be standing with one of the most influential leaders in the future history of the African continent. This man is taking steps in new territory comparable to what Nelson Mandela did for South Africa and Abraham Lincoln did for America. There is no doubt that God has placed the perfect leader for such serious times at the lead of the heart of all of Africa. He is restoring his country and setting a new standard for government leaders in Africa. What an honor it was to admire the work he is doing for this beautiful nation and the influence he is gaining globally.

Great people of faith are rising in influence everywhere.

Us.

My final thought is the idea of possibility. We all experienced a way we could get involved. I am encouraged by the thousands who began this initiative to bring clean water to Rwanda, and continue to contribute to it today. There is never a better time to do something than now. The Rwanda Clean Water Project is obviously a journey that is shaping future lives for years to come.

May we have compassion to care for the poor, widows, needy, hurting, and hungry.

Humbly,

Jeff Shinabarger
Co-Founder of Rwanda Clean Water