

BASIC INFORMATION FOR YOUR NICARAGUA ADVENTURE!

(written by Melody which explains some of my comments)

Revised 08/02/11

If you are reading this then perhaps you are praying about joining us on a mission experience to Nicaragua! Keeping in mind that each crusade will be built around a specific location....most of the following information will apply.

START UP COSTS

Our goal is to make your trip the cost of the plane ticket (you'll purchase) plus no more than \$700 (which would cover hotel, transportation, simple breakfast plus a sandwich at lunch & outreach supplies). This will not always apply to every team as each of you are developing from a crusade to a VBS. We will be asking for \$100 non refundable deposit from each team member up front (will be deducted from the \$700). This will be used for making hotel & vehicle rental deposits, phone calls to Nicaragua & other things required in planning your experience.

NOTE: For 2012 we are going to ask that the balance be paid 2 weeks before your actual trip (to clear the bank) OR paid to us immediately upon arriving in Nicaragua. Once the crusade begins there are constantly items to be purchased and having it in advance keeps us from running you down to get it. Thank you in advance for your understanding.

Additional information under TRIP COSTS and a special section at the end for the TEAM LEADER.

WHAT TO WEAR

MEN

From what I've noticed the Nicaraguan pastors wear slacks and shirt with a collar. They may wear the same ensemble several times during the week. The Americans are fine with **jeans and a collar/T shirt**. Teenagers and younger are fine with an appropriate T-shirt. Wear comfortable shoes. If your crusade is in a rain forest area you will need rubber boots (we purchase ours when we get there). Bring 2 pair in the event one gets wet or muddy. Read advice in next paragraph about backpacks. Shorts (female teenagers....no short shorts!) are fine for the hotel & walking but not for the daily crusade meetings. Please don't embarrass us with your WHITE legs!

WOMEN

We had considered being more lenient in this area but feel led to stick with our dress/skirt policy, out of respect to those we work with. When in Rome do as the Romans do! They wear **casual dresses and skirts**. On the plus side – they're cooler, on the down side – we may be climbing in & out of the back of trucks. You may want to wear shorts or leggings underneath. NOTE: wearing leggings may be comfortable BUT if you have on a thin fabric skirt it still looks like you have nothing on underneath. Cotton slips are way less sticky than polyester/nylon. My broomstick skirts are all from either Goodwill, Salvation Army or Ross. Wear something you can move around in (no panty hose). Don't bring dressy stuff – be comfortable. For several years I only wore tennis shoes but have found sandals to be so much cooler. I bring both, though my sandals/flip flops are able to be washed off so there is no drying involved. (Check out rubber boot comment in the Men section). I also wear sun visors – you won't catch me without one.

Hats may be more your thing. Hand fan – my most vital resource (remember the mortuary ones we used to have in the church pew?!)

LADIES AND GENTS --YOUR BAG/BACKPACK

I carry a backpack or a shoulder purse that straps around me but keeps my hands free to work. My advice – I carry my camera, LIPSTICK, gum, money, hand sanitizer, passport. Keep it lightweight. You **don't need** your 50# bible (unless you're preaching & blind & need your large print) (take an itty bitty one & it can stay in your hotel room for your devotion), wallet w/10#'s of stuff in it, etc. Take only what your back can handle on a llllooonnggg day. Same advice if you carry a backpack. Take it full on the airplane – lighten it up in your hotel room. What you take in the field – you carry – no leaving in the vehicles – unless it doesn't mean a lot to you. Travel light. *P.S. We're preaching SALVATION – not through a book.*

Bring whatever medications with you to keep you in solid working order! My medicine of choice would be chocolate! Probably ought to bring along Pepto Bismal tablets, Immodium pills, Benedryl (them ants love my feet, may love yours too), & something for a headache. Chocolate can't cure everything.....

MONEY

You will need money for your night meal and any snacks. Nathan can eat CHEAP because he will eat anything. Me? I'm getting better but for sure my food will be cooked. Expect to spend approx \$4-7.00 for supper. NOTE...Each team will vary, while one may include breakfast with the hotel, others will not. Often we provide fruit and sweet bread for the national pastors and you. We'll let your team leader know in advance. We have found many Nicaragua buffet spots that we tend to enjoy. The day before we fly back to the States we should be at a HUGE market in Masaya where you can get souvenirs. Cordobas are 22 (at the moment) to our one dollar. Cokes are usually around 12 cordobas. Probably plan to bring a minimum of \$100.00 per person for spending money unless you want lots of goodies. The Lord may also impress upon you to bless someone – so..... do as you're led. Don't depend on ATM card machines. They don't always work in other countries. Once we arrive in Nicaragua we will exchange our money for cordoba's. **We suggest you exchange \$50.00 (1000 cordobas) to get you started. Have \$50.00 cash available for me & I'll get it taken care of.** There are ATM's but I never depend on them in a foreign country – they may work, may not. In South Africa – it was a may not!

SNACKS

Keep in mind when we say your breakfast and lunch are provided that means sweet bread and fruit for breakfast and a sandwich for lunch. I can remember being in a remote area with volcanoes surrounding us and wishing for something cool when out of nowhere THE ESKIMO MAN appeared! I don't care where you are – they're there! You can also find a coke or purified water bag for sale at many of the schools. No one has ever starved to death during our watch. But then again I always come prepared with my favorite American snacks – Pringles (don't smash), beef jerkey, Cheerios and M&M's. Nathan says he doesn't need this stuff though he has NEVER refused my offer to share. You know YOUR body so plan accordingly to its need.

LUGGAGE

It appears that a Continental international flight will give you the first piece of check in luggage free. Your team may take some outreach supplies with you & that cost will be on you. You still can carry a backpack (of your own) on board. For the trip home you can use your empty carry on for dirty clothes or souvenirs.

Be sure to have luggage tags for identification plus some bright handkerchief or other for easy I.D. of your bag.

If you haven't flown in awhile – you are limited to 3 oz. or less bottles of liquid products (hair gel, toothpaste, etc.). Everything of that sort HAS to fit into one quart size ziplock type clear bag which you will take out of your carryon bag to go through the security area. If you have insulin/needles that need to be kept with you – have a doctor's letter explaining why – with you.

LAPTOPS

Internet should be accessible in our hotel. I'll let you know if I find out differently. We have found it convenient to carry our small Netbook that weighs almost nothing. **NOTE...** last year the Internet was not accessible in Somotillo – and the teenagers did great without it. At the end of the trip we did find Internet and I just watched them (& some adults) just start pecking and checking their Facebook. When committing to this mission trip, pray about just leaving those little conveniences packed up – this way you're able to fully concentrate on WHY YOU'RE HERE...even if the Internet is accessible!

Bring a flash drive to get everyone's pictures downloaded.

HOTEL ACCOMODATIONS

We will stay in rooms with AC (generally). Married couples will have rooms & those coming in the single category will share with other singles. Some folks want to room alone because of personal reasons (SNORING!) If there are any rooms left we'll see if you can get one but you'll have to pay the additional cost. We are limited on how many rooms have AC as they also cater to those that require NO AC. Our team will fill up all the AC spots I'm sure. In our experience you will receive a daily towel but no washrag so bring those if needed. We've also found laundry service to be relative inexpensive though keep in mind they usually scrub on washboards then line dry on the hotel roof. We always pray for non cloudy days when the jeans are put out to dry. **NOTE...**when I think everything is an absolute – something changes. In 2011 one of the hotels fooled us on their accommodations. We THOUGHT all rooms were identical to those on the first floor BUT lo and behold...they weren't! They had fans plus the showers were 'pour water (from a giant barrel) over your body to wash and in the toilet to flush!' Once everyone got over the shock...they seemed fine... 90% of the time though...it's not so drastic!

NOTE FOR MAN CRUSADES: You will be staying in Hostels which are generally non A/C and a little more primitive but will provide a night's rest.

OUTREACH SUPPLIES

(MAY NOT APPLY TO ALL CRUSADES...) We will carry as many ink pens as possible in those bags we're giving you. Once we arrive in Nicaragua we will purchase the candy and rice or sugar. Our bible tracts and Gospel of Johns should already be there. We give every child an ink pen, candy, tract. Adults receive candy, rice or sugar and tract or Gospel of John. Sometimes the schools let us in just because we have brought small gifts.

RESPONSIBILITIES

WHY, I WOULD LOVE TOO..... is the perfect response when asked to do something. We are flexible (have been told that eventually 'flexible' will break & that we should be 'fluid'!) and willing to do whatever will help with this crusade.

Women – in the morning we break up into 2 areas –

**Breakfast-* along with the Nicaragua women we set up the food area for the sweet bread and fruit plus the coffee area. Often our new friends take over these tasks but we stay close to be of assistance. 8:00 a.m. will be prayer – then they'll file through & the ladies will hand them they're food.

**Lunch* – THE SANDWICH TEAM! Each person receives a sandwich to take with them for lunch. This is a big responsibility! One lays out the bread, one puts mayo on it, one slaps down the meat, one stacks them, one puts them in baggies, one cheers everyone on (that's ME!). Teamwork gets it done plus you're making friends with your new sisters.

***Once the first official day is over – you'll be an old hand at this. Things just always fall into place. Be prepared for lots of hugging as they (women) will be happy to work with you.

Men – Mornings are busy. Each team will have someone responsible for organizing the Outreach for the day. Since our meetings are preplanned with approximate numbers for each area we're going – we'll pack daily supplies according to the numbers in the Outreach notebook. The American/Nicaraguans will work on loading the vehicles every morning with supplies and unload in the evenings.

SERVICES

SCHOOLS – There are 2 styles of preaching at the schools.

- Preach to the students in one large group setting. Sometimes in an auditorium or outside in the school yard. The Nicaraguan pastors will provide wonderful, uplifting music, maybe one or two short testimonies (be prepared), then a salvation message. All will be over within an hour including distribution of the outreach. We ALWAYS meet with the teachers in one setting after the students have gone back to their classroom. We want this special time to preach to them. I've got to do it several times (I know, we don't preach, we share).
- Classroom to classroom. We've found that the saying "different strokes for different folks applies to this situation also. We let the Nicaraguan pastors decide. If they choose this, the pastors and Americans break into groups of 2 and preach in the classrooms. Others will come around to give out the Outreach. I have 'shared' this way also – found out that it's o.k. for a woman to share about Jesus in a group setting.

COMMUNITIES – The communities will be homes and churches where the pastor’s serve. We prefer not preaching in a church. If you’re in an open area folks are more willing to join the crowd and listen. But we’ve learned to be flexible and gone where the pastors have prepared. It’s all good! We will teach you our methods of sharing outreach which will help prevent chaos when you’re dealing with several hundred folks not wanting to be left out.

NOTE: The “SERVICES” information may not apply to your team. If you have an EVANGELISTIC crusade...it does. Sometimes we’ll have an EYEGLASS team, VBS team, etc which will have it’s own layout.

WEATHER

If the wind blows - our Nicaraguan friends will be dressed in their winter coats. We have always found it to be warm. You may want to slip in a small umbrella. If we find ourselves in a rainy area there are always markets to pick up rubber boots!

TRANSLATORS

Each team will have a translator included for you English only folks (me!). Throughout the week we tend to develop a relationship with them even before we do with our new Nicaraguan pastors/families – that’s because they speak English & Spanish and our other folks only speak Spanish. Most everyone in this country has financial needs though because of the language barrier we may not be aware of them. If the Lord lays on your heart to share with a pastor family – do as you’re led. They gave up work for the week to be on this crusade. The translators will be paid for the work that they do for the team. Be careful not to give out your personal information to everyone. I guarantee you will receive calls/emails from folks asking for money. Each year we remind the translators to NOT ask for \$\$\$ from the team or hint at their needs which has you running to me seeing if we actually pay them. Again, if the Lord lays it on your heart.....

YOUR SPECIFIC TRIP

This information applies to most everyone’s trip location though it may vary slightly...depending on YOUR crusade. Once your team leader & Nathan have worked out the particulars we can set up a payment schedule, purchase tickets, etc.

TRIP COSTS

- This year we will not quote an actual trip cost in this information. We will be planning your trip around your ministry ideas which may be plus or minus in the money area. If you’re looking at a purely evangelism team & want the national pastors to go with us that will include vehicle rentals, rice cost, meals for the nationals and on. Once we find out what you have in mind we’ll work on some figures. We do know that we’ll give you a figure which will include your hotel, breakfast, lunch & then your ideas. The flight from your home to Managua, Nicaragua will be your responsibility. We may advise you to which flight from Houston to Nicaragua to take.
- Don’t wait to long to purchase your flight. Fuel is going up & so will the ticket price.
- Once you set your crusade date we’ll let you know when the finances are due. PLEASE PRAY ABOUT GOING. Once you sign up on the team & start paying the \$\$\$ it is often

impossible to reimburse you if you decide to withdraw. The \$\$\$ will be used to put up room & transportation deposits. Also, when you give your commitment to go – YOUR TEAM IS DEPENDING ON YOU!

- Your last payment will be due 2 weeks before your trip.
- This information may not apply to everyone if you've made other arrangements with us.

VISA'S

Visa papers will be distributed by the airline attendants during our Nicaragua flight. They are self explanatory – each individual will fill out one plus another form given you – one per family. Some things to know – you are a tourist, your final destination is Chinedega OR Mulukuku OR Nueva Gunea OR Juigalpa, (or wherever your crusade is) and your passport numbers. Once we arrive we'll go through customs so have your passport, VISA, \$10.00 and a smile handy!

EVANGECUBES

Last year the teams used Evangecubes in presenting the gospel in large/small groups along with one on one evangelism. The local pastors and youth were also trained in their use with an out-pouring of confidence displayed while sharing! Maybe your church would be interested in purchasing some for your crusade? I've found assorted websites offering them at \$4.00 per 100 and in the stores at \$8.00 each.

THIS CAN CAUSE PROBLEMS

PLEASE do not make promises to the nationals that you cannot keep. You may have the best intentions in the world but they could still fall through. When you tell them 'maybe we can build you a church' or 'we'll send some money' or 'we'll send money for presents for the kids'...you are setting yourself up for a broken heart when it doesn't go through. It would be better for them to be surprised than to build their hopes up. Also...be careful when you innocently make the comment..."if you're ever in the U.S., drop by." Just last year someone translated that into an invitation to come visit (thinking the Americans would pay).

The final night of the crusade we usually have a celebration. You will receive letters from many asking for your assistance. Offer to pray for their needs but make no promises. Refer to above paragraph. Why do I go into such detail.....we've seen it over & over & really want to make sure the Lord leads rather than our emotional being.

IF YOU'RE PLANNING ON DOING VBS

Keep in mind that when I mention VBS, it won't be the style you're used to in the States. Many times we lay out a large tarp for the children to sit on. From puppet shows, telling stories & passing out color sheets or dramas...to others going door to door inviting others to join us for a preaching service. **NOTE:** A thought occurred to me yesterday as I was sitting in the Sunday School class at our Dump church. Recently I found some teaching material that included very visual pictures. Josephina was teaching about Moses & the waters parting & the kids were enthralled as they studied the picture during her lesson. VISUALS! When your kids are preparing their lessons, if they could have pictures or some type of visual that will explain the story along with the teaching. I've heard this story taught before to another group (with no visuals). Imagine growing up in the dump with no electric, TV, story books & then someone tells you how Moses parted the sea. Can't even visualize it. We can because we have that stuff

in our heads. **END OF NOTE!** At the end of each service we will pray (with individuals if possible), pass out rice or beans & bibles for the adults & candy for the children.

WHAT DOES YOUR TESTIMONY SAY ABOUT YOU?

Advice I used to share with our children...who you're with is who you are. Not exactly biblical but good old common sense, right? I've served as a pastor's wife for 20 years & now have completed over 7 years in the missionary role. Through the years I've witnessed how comfortable folks are IN THEIR SALVATION that they continue to live their old life rather than use this opportunity to let their behavior...(which serves as a testimony to the LOST, whether it's a good one OR bad), be Christ Centered! Now you KNOW I'm NOT talking about YOU...just what I've observed throughout the field of ministry.

I WANT my testimony to show me as becoming more Christ like, Christ centered, Christ focused. It doesn't always SHOUT JESUS but aren't we glad for God's grace? Once I became a Christian I was part of a "Survival Skills For New Christians" class to help prepare us for our walk in Christ. To this day I still remember the verse from **2 Corinthians 5:17 - Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.**

Though we know the ONLY way to not have a home in heaven is to REJECT Jesus Christ as your Savior ...your actions proclaim WHO you ARE in Jesus Christ! At the same time, once you receive Him as your Savior we are called to give up our 'old ways' to become Christ like. Before joining LEM on a mission trip please prayerfully consider leaving those visual habits (smoking/alcohol) at home for the week you're ministering in Nicaragua. We are a Christian organization that's primary goal is to lead the lost to Jesus Christ.

Whether you're going on a mission trip OR serving in your community, remember...make your testimony one that comes naturally to you...let your actions proclaim JESUS CHRIST! The bottom line is that we are all in different stages of maturity in Christ. We should encourage one another and we should decide to walk in the freedom that Christ has revealed to us while making up our minds not to cause our brothers and sisters in Christ to stumble in their faith by our actions (Romans 14:13). How we do this is by loving our neighbor as ourselves. Don't be a stumbling block to others. Just something to think about....

Testimonies – Be prepared to share your testimony of how you came to know the Lord as your Savior. Consider that many of the folks you'll be speaking to have no idea what church camp is, the meaning of walking an aisle, or something that points directly to a U.S. experience. Tell how you knew you didn't have Jesus, How you figured out you needed Jesus and How you got Jesus. This isn't a magic formula but things to keep in mind. Lord willing, EVERYONE needs to be prepared to give theirs. Consider using Rick Warrens tips on giving a testimony.

HOW TO SHARE THE GOOD NEWS THROUGH YOUR TESTIMONY

by Rick Warren

God has put a life message within you. When you became a believer you also became God's messenger. God wants to speak to the world through you. Paul said, "... we speak the truth before God, as messengers of God." You may feel you don't have anything to share, but that's the Devil trying to keep you silent. You have a storehouse of experiences that God wants to use to bring others into his family. The Bible says, "Those who believe in the Son of God have the testimony of God in them." (1 John 5:10a GW)

Your testimony is the story of how Christ has made a difference in your life. Peter tells us that we were chosen by God "to do his work and speak out for him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference he made for you." (1 Peter 2:9 MSG) This is the essence of witnessing – simply reporting your personal experiences with the Lord. In a courtroom, a witness isn't expected to argue the case, prove the truth, or press for a verdict; that is the job of attorneys. Witnesses just tell what happened to them. Jesus said, "You will be my witnesses." (Acts 1:8 NIV) He did not say, "You must be my attorney." He wants you to tell your story to others. Sharing your testimony is an essential part of your mission on Earth.

First, it is unique. There's no other story just like yours, so only you can share it, and if you don't, it will be lost forever. You may not be a Bible scholar, but you are the authority on your life, and it's hard to argue with personal experience. Actually, your personal testimony is more effective than a sermon because unbelievers see pastors as paid salesmen but see you as a satisfied customer, so they give you more credibility. Personal stories are also easier to relate to than principles, and people love to hear them; they capture our attention, and we remember them longer. Unbelievers would probably lose interest if you started quoting theologians, but they have a natural curiosity about experiences they've never had. Shared stories build a relational bridge that Jesus can walk across from your heart to theirs.

Another value of your testimony is that it bypasses intellectual defenses. Many people who won't accept the authority of the Bible will listen to a humble, personal story. That's why on six different occasions Paul used his testimony to share the Gospel instead of quoting Scripture. (Acts 22 to Acts 26) The Bible says, "Be ready at all times to answer anyone who asks you to explain the hope you have in you, but do it with gentleness and respect." (1 Peter 3:15-16 TEV)

The best way to "be ready" is to write out your testimony and then memorize the main points.

Divide it into four parts:

- What my life was like before I met Jesus?
- How did I realize I needed Jesus?
- How did I commit my life to Jesus?
- What difference has Jesus made in my life?

Of course, you have many other testimonies besides your salvation story. You have a story for every experience where God has helped you. You should make list of all the problems, circumstances, and crises that God has brought you through. Then be sensitive and use the story that your unbelieving friend will best relate to.

Questions To Consider (Ideas for sharing a brief testimony)

1. **The Story Of Your Life**—Tell us a little bit about yourself (birthplace, parents/siblings, interests, etc.).
2. **The Story Of Your Faith**—What was your life like before knowing God personally? How did you come to know Jesus in your life? How are things different today?
3. **Coming To Grace**--When you moved into this area, how you ended up at this new church, what you like best, why you stayed, got involved, etc
4. **Stories Of Grace**—What has God been teaching you through his Word? How has He been providing for you, your family, etc? What have you learned about serving God, living out your faith in daily life, or loving others? How do you hope to continuing growing in faith and serving God in the future? What plans or desires do you have?

NOTE: Remember to keep in mind when you're on a foreign mission trip what I said about them not understanding some of our U.S. experiences.

TO THE TEAM LEADER

YOUR CRUSADE COST – To determine the cost of your crusade there are several things to determine....American group size, number of vehicles to rent (buses & vans to transport American and Nicaraguan to preaching areas), breakfast and sandwich costs for whole team, outreach supplies (ink pens, rice, candy, bible tracts), number of folks we'll be preaching to figure for quantity of outreach supplies), hotels for American, payment of translators, administration costs, vehicle fuel and anything else I forgot. We take those costs and divide it amongst the # on the American team.

Nathan works diligently to figure the budget to cover the crusade needs and to keep the trip affordable for the team members. Once your Team Leader brings us a firm commitment, he/she will be the one that we will correspond with about the crusade. You will be responsible for purchasing your plane tickets and providing us with balance of the crusade costs. LEM will determine the budget requirements, from our years of experience in Nicaragua and our contacts there that help set things up.

If you COMMIT to a certain number of team members, have some drop out...that leaves the team in a bind. The moment you agree to a mission trip with us we start things in motion – select an area of the country to work in, meet with the pastor/leaders to plan the crusade, they start making appointments with the schools and communities that the Americans will be coming and bring us the number of students and adults we will be working with. As a Christian we have committed to the pastor/leaders that we will provide for these numbers. We cannot come back to them and say 'well, only 5 of the 10 actually came...you need to determine who will not hear the gospel of Jesus.' We WON'T do that. So, in order to keep OUR word, we need YOU to keep your word. Pray about the size of team you believe your church can send. If you believe there will not be enough to carry a crusade we'll talk to another team about you joining with them.

IN SUMMARY

If you feel the Lord nudging you to join our team – commit. I can assure you that we used to go back and forth with the Lord on what to do BUT once we committed He paved the way. We just had to quit arguing with Him. Many say 'we'll go next year' but I've not once seen that happen. Pray about it.

PHONE CALLS

Calling from Nicaragua to United States....Dial 001 plus the number you're calling.

Calling from United States to Nicaragua...Dial 011505 plus the number you're calling.

BE AVAILABLE – MINGLE – ENCOURAGE – BE FLEXIBLE – PRAY – BE WILLING – SHARE JESUS!

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