



# CHRISTIANS' HAVEN

A Ministry to **Street Children** and  
**Orphans** of the Philippine Islands



## Life-Changing Mission Trips

Mission trips to our campus are an exciting event for our kids and also life-changing for those making the trip.

Our President, Lynn Ragsdale, recently brought his wife, Betsy, daughter, Nerlita, and her friend Stephanie to visit the work of Christians' Haven. He also brought his eldest son Chad. Chad is 32 years old, married with three children and a professor at Ozark Christian College in Joplin, Missouri.

When Chad returned home he wrote about his adventure to the Philippines. Below is a short excerpt from his blog. Please go to his blog *nothin' but rags* (<http://chadragdale.blogspot.com/2009/10/philippine-reflections-index.html>) to read the remainder of his reflections.

"There is no effective way to describe the things that you see in a city like Manila. Anyone with a heart finds that his first experience in Manila is like getting beat up and broken. How do you respond to ten boys mobbing you asking for money - knowing that these ten boys represent hundreds and thousands of others? How do you process the sight of a slum built hastily over a river/dump where children share the water with their own refuse? After our experience at the mall on that first night we were all a bit overwhelmed and in need of a taxi ride to the hotel and a good night's sleep, but on the way back I saw an image that will stick with me for a long time. An elderly woman lay face down, sleeping on the side of the street on a raggedy, old mat. Sleeping at the side of the elderly woman was a toddler, about the age of my son. He was completely naked and exposed - covered in the filth of the city. There were street hustlers and middle-class business men shuffling past them without as much as a glance. How could such poverty and such callousness exist? We are often flippant with the question, "Where is



God?" using it as a crutch to support our own discontent, but in this moment and in the moment of my writing this, I muttered the Psalm 42 question to myself. That night I went back to the bathroom of my hotel room and wept - wept for this woman and the child, wept that it was raining outside, wept for a city that has run out of solutions and so walks past, and honestly, I wept for myself and the callousness and greed within my own heart. That child felt like a personal indictment - not because I felt personally responsible - but because a child allowed to live like that is an indictment on us all."

Why not plan a mission trip of your own to visit the work of Christians' Haven. You, too, will experience a life-changing adventure. Contact Christians' Haven by phone, mail, or through the web site to begin the process.

## Spotlighting a CH Kid

Meet Cherwin Breonis Baricuatro. He was born in Iligan City and is the third of seven children. Both parents are still alive, his mother engaging in vending coconut wine on the streets and his father is mostly unemployed due to poor health. This poor health is mostly due to continuously being drunk.



Cherwin can still recall September 28, 2001 when he was awakened by his friend telling him that somebody will help them to attain their goals in life. That somebody was Christians' Haven. Cherwin said "yes" to the invitation to come. He was told that it was nice in Manticao (location of the CH Home). His parents approved of this and proper DSWD paperwork was accomplished. After a bath and some new

clothes he was settled in. It was hard for him at first and he ran away a few times. He did, however, improve in attitude and behavior. Cherwin then became serious about his studies and is forever grateful to the staff members who were very patient with him. He has become one of the most responsible children on the campus.

It was found out that due to his family's poverty, the parents were not able to register him when he was born, thus a home visit was in order to correct this issue and secure a proper birth certificate. His family was found living in the market where his sisters and one brother just roam begging and stealing. Cherwin did not share this information with CH because he was ashamed about where he lived. They are called street or market kids. His siblings are not attending school due to their poverty.

Please pray for Cherwin as he continues to do well in school and become a strong disciple of Jesus. Also pray for his smaller siblings as their mother would love for them to have an opportunity at Christians' Haven. Pray that God would provide more space so that many like them could be rescued, restored, and then returned as educated, equipped disciples of Jesus Christ.

## CH New Website

Be sure to visit us on our new website at [www.christianshaven.com](http://www.christianshaven.com). This is a great way to stay up to date on all of the latest at Christians' Haven. You can also sign up for mission trips, donate and keep up with Lynn through the blog.



## The Lost Art of Disciple Making

That is the title of a great book written by Leroy Eims in 1978. It is still one of my favorites on the subject of disciple making. As a ministry dedicated to making disciples, Christians' Haven strives to answer the call of Jesus to "go and make disciples" but does so by reaching to the cast aways of culture, the street children and orphans of the Philippines.

In Mr. Eims book he has a chapter titled, "The Process of Making Disciples." He begins with a vivid illustration that may help us all see our churches more clearly.

**"Visualize a large manufacturing plant in your town or city that produces shoes. The management has invested great sums of money and many man-hours into the plant to produce the finest shoes possible. Money has been spent on salaries for the employees, machinery for shoemaking, and materials from which the shoes are to be made. The plant is now in operation with hundreds of workers scurrying to and fro. Machines are running full blast, and activity is at a maximum.**

**One day the president asks the production manager, 'How many shoes have we produced so far?'**

**'None,' the manager answers.**

**'None!' the president exclaims. 'How long have we been in operation?'**

**'Two years.'**

**'Two years? And still no shoes?'**

**'That's right,' the manager says, 'no shoes, but we are really busy. In fact, we have been so busy that we are all nearly tired out. We've been very active at our jobs.'**

**What would the management do in a case like this? Have collective coronaries? Become angry? Concerned? Fire somebody? Try to find out what the problem was? They would probably do all of these things because the reason for this factory's existence is to produce shoes. Management wants their investment to pay off.**

**Now let's put a cross on top of that building and transform it into the church on the corner – your church. Again, there is much activity. Men and women are working hard. The budget is higher this year than ever before. The church is very active. The objective, however, is not to produce shoes but disciples.**

**The analysis of Jesus of His own time was, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.' (Matt. 9:37). If we're honest with ourselves, we would all sadly admit that it is still the case today. Spiritually qualified workers – disciples who labor hard to make other disciples – are rare."**

More than thirty years after Leroy Eims wrote these words I notice that many churches are busier than ever but confess that much of their energy is not making more disciples. I only share these words with you because we all are in the same business and could stand a healthy and loving reminder to focus our energies more intentionally on the lost art of disciple making.

# Christmas in the Philippines

(from Jane Salignet, CH Philippine Social Worker)

The Tagalog word *Pasko* derives from the Spanish word *Pascua*. Although the word *Pascua* means Easter, *Pascua de Navidad* refers to Christmas.

The Philippines is known for having the world's longest Christmas season. The four months that end with the syllable—*ber* are considered Christmas months. Stores and households start singing carols on the first day of September! And the holiday season extends beyond December 31st. It doesn't end until the Feast of the Epiphany or Three Kings (*Tatlong Hari*) which falls around January 6.

If Mexico has piñatas, the Philippines has its *parol*. Of course, a *parol* is not something to hit with a stick. It is a Christmas lantern, most commonly in the shape of a star. The bamboo or rattan frame is covered with rice paper, tissue, or cellophane. Almost every family either builds or buys one to hang by the window or door. Shopping malls construct giant versions of *parol*. Traditionally, a candle was placed inside for light to shine through; for safety reasons, people now use bulbs or even a flashlight.

Families, schools and other places also display a crèche or nativity scene called *belen*.

Christmas trees made of plastic are decorated with lights, tinsel and balls. Since pine trees grow only in a few places in the Philippines, most Filipinos cannot afford to have a fresh Christmas tree. Filipinos have created unique and original Christmas trees using different kinds of local materials—an exquisite form of art.

Christmas Caroling is usually done when the *Simbang Gabi* (Night Worship) starts. Children form groups and enjoy hopping from one house to another singing "Silent Night," "Jingle Bells" and other traditional Christmas songs.

The Tagalog word for gift is *regalo*, but Filipinos have a special word for Christmas gift—*pamasko*. The Filipino version of Santa is called *Monito*, *Monita* or *Kris Kringle*. It is the season of gift giving. Students in their classes and office workers all hold gift exchanges during the Christmas season. Children receive fresh bills of money called *aginaldo* usually when they visit their godparents and elderly relatives on Christmas morning.



On Christmas Eve (*Bisperas ng Pasko*), a few Filipino towns commemorate Joseph and Mary's search for a place to stay with a reenactment called *panunuluyan*, a tradition very similar to the Mexican *posadas*.

What every Filipino looks forward to is *Noche* time for visiting relatives. Filipinos wear new if not their best clothes. Children do *mano*, which is kissing or bringing to their forehead the hand of an elderly person. *Noche* time is when they receive their *pamasko* (Christmas gift). It can be in the form of a gift or money (*aginaldo*) given most usually to younger children.

Filipino Christmas is about family and closeness. Christmas lunch and Christmas dinner are with family. In every home you visit you will be offered food to eat. Every family has made something special for this day. At the end of the day everyone wishes each other good cheer and glad tidings.

Christmas officially ends on the Feast of the Three Kings (*Tatlong Hari*) also known as the feast of Epiphany. Traditionally it has been commemorated on January 6, but it is now celebrated on the first Sunday of the year. Some children leave their shoes out for the Three Kings to leave behind gifts like candy or money inside. After the Three Kings celebrations all Christmas decorations are removed.

*Maligayang Pasko sa Inyong Lahat!*  
(Merry Christmas to Everyone!!)



## Help Provide Christmas Gifts for our kids

One of Christians' Haven's traditions is to make sure all of our precious kids receive a gift (*pamasko*) at Christmas. Would you please consider and pray about a special gift to Christians' Haven this month to help us ensure that none of our kids are left out. Giving a gift is easy. Simply mail a check to Christians' Haven, P.O. Box 369, Webb City, MO 64870 designating it "Christmas Gifts" or go on line to [christianshaven.com](http://christianshaven.com) to make your donation. Thank you for your help in adding to the joy of our children this Christmas season.



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## Not-So-Secret Agents of Change

By Lynn R. Ragsdale, President

I was ready to get on an airplane in the Philippines and, as is customary, the flight attendant offered a newspaper to me as I stepped through the door. It was an English newspaper so I accepted her offer hoping to catch some world news that may have been missed. I was somewhat stunned by the headline on page one. It read: "Philippines most corrupt nation in Asia." I was not stunned by that revelation but by the honesty it took to print it. Yes, the Philippines is corrupt politically, economically, and morally. It is a nation of extremes. Some have great wealth while most others live in poverty.

The population of the Philippines is approximately 93 million. The land mass on which they live is about the size of Arizona. Of those millions, it is estimated that 70% are unemployed or underemployed living well below anyone's line for poverty. Many survive on one dollar per day as a family. This results in an estimated 1.5 million kids living on the streets with no home or parents to care for them. They exist by begging, stealing, or working for unscrupulous drug dealers or sex handlers.

The religious story is also quite depressing. There is only 5% estimated to be Christian and that is using the very broad definition of the word "Christian." The great need in the Philippines is not foreign aid from America. It is not political reform. It is not even an economic boom. It is in the need for more disciples who will be agents for spiritual change. That is the core of the mission of Christians' Haven.

I love to read scripture and find events and people who model character traits that are needed today. In the book of Daniel I find many such stories. They also come to us from kids – homeless and parentless kids. Although on the surface their circumstance seems different from those of the CH kids, their resulting circumstance is quite similar. What can we learn from them?

Daniel chapter one records the events that led to the brightest and best young men being taken from their Hebrew families and immersed into the Babylonian culture. "Make sure they are well versed in every branch of learning, are gifted with knowledge and good sense ... Teach these young men the language and literature of the Babylonians." (Daniel 1:4)

The story then focuses on four of the young men taken. Three are known best to us by their Babylonian names and one by his Hebrew name. They are Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Their first test was to refuse the food of the Babylonians. God rewarded their courage by making them stronger than those who did eat the Babylonian diet. The next test comes quickly as recorded in chapter two.

By God's power Daniel was able to explain King Nebuchadnezzar's dream when no one else was able to do so. The king rewarded Daniel with a high appointment in

his administration. The king also made this remarkable statement in Daniel 2:47. "Truly, your God is the God of gods, the Lord over kings, a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this secret."

We are not sure how much time passes between that statement and the next chapter of the book. We do know, however, that the king's new found commitment to God was short-lived. Daniel three holds the infamous record of our other three homeless kids and a fiery furnace. You see, the king approved a golden statue to be set up and demanded that everyone bow down and worship that statue. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused and faced execution of the most severe kind. They were to be tossed into a fiery furnace. According to verse seven, everyone else was accommodating the king. Every nationality and language group alike bowed down to the statue. But not this small band of Jews living among them. Verse nineteen describes it best. "Nebuchadnezzar was so furious ... that his face became distorted with rage. He commanded that the furnace be heated seven times hotter than usual."



What brought on such rage from the king? Well, that just may be the best part of the story. It comes our way in the verses preceding verse nineteen. "If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. But even if He doesn't, Your Majesty can be sure that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up."

In the midst of that verse we find a jewel of discipleship. The young men did not know that God would actually come into the furnace with them and save them. They did not know their lives would be spared. What they did know was that they would never stop serving God no matter what the culture around them did. The real discipleship jewel is exposed in these powerful words; "But even if He doesn't." There is no promise that serving God will make life easy. On the contrary; Jesus said that "in this world you will have trouble." But, even if it doesn't work the way we want it too, we will still serve God in a corrupt culture.

We have our own Daniels, Shadrachs, Meshachs, and Abednegos. They are former street kids and orphans. They, like these Old Testament heroes, are making the name of Jesus famous in a corrupt culture. They may stand alone and even suffer for the name of Jesus but they will press on. Some will be culture changers who are teachers, some will be culture changers who work as engineers, and others will be social workers or mechanics or farmers who, as disciples of Jesus will change the landscape of the culture of the Philippines.

Thank you so very much for the prayers and financial support you send our way to ensure this disciple making ministry continues to do just that – make disciples who will transform cultures

Lynn R. Ragsdale, President