

“Seeing Past the Bars”

By Stephanie Germano

Matthew 9:36 says “But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.” In this verse we see the depth of Jesus’ love for us and His desire for “all to come to repentance”. Oh that we may see the lost through the eyes of the Lord.

On October 28th, 2015, we got on a plane and took a one way flight to Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. We were amazed how God provided every need! Within our first week, He had provided us with a car, a place to live, and many people who were so kind to help us get settled. Not long after we had moved in, I had noticed something that I had overlooked during all the busyness of the move. There were thick bars in every window. It seemed odd to me, and sadly it really took away from the beautiful view outside. As time went by, however, the initial excitement of being in a new place began to fade. Soon, reality began to set in. The new culture and its differences became more defined. The inability to communicate with others began to feel isolating. Keeping house and home has always been something I have enjoyed, but all of a sudden those bars in the windows began to feel confining. They began to represent something more, reminding me of the homesickness that was growing each day and the changes to which I was trying adapt. Every time, however, where there was discouragement, God would replace it with His sweet joy! We could feel Him helping all of us adapt in every way.

One morning toward the end of June, I woke up with what I thought to be bad case of pink eye. Later, we were told by the doctor that I had somehow contracted salmonella in my right eye. The infection left a thick scar over my cornea. Though it was a scary few months, God replaced fear with His sweet peace. I have felt the prayers of God’s people as I have had the privilege to literally watch the Lord heal my eye! Over just a few months’ time, the Lord has restored my sight close to what it was before the infection!

Not too long ago as I was watering the flowers, I looked out over our neighborhood. Now many of the faces we see each day have not just a name, but a story. At times you can see some of the students from the school around the corner crossing the street. Many of them do not know Jesus as their Savior and desperately need Him to change their lives. There is a lady across the street, who cooks at park to provide for her two precious daughters. Oh what the Lord could do in her life if she would just place her trust in Him. I watched the men who deliver the weekly water jug orders as they zoomed in and out of the cul-de-sac on their motorcycles. What an opportunity that the Lord has given us to be a witness to them each week! As I was taking everything in, something suddenly occurred to me. For the first time I was able to look out of the window and not even notice those metal bars. Furthermore, I realized that it was not just my physical sight that the Lord was improving. God had given grace where it was needed to help me look past myself and the changes in my life that seemed, at the time, so hard to ignore. There will always be a set of challenges that we have to look past. May we as Christians always

depend on God's strength to help us do this very thing, and only then can we look through the eyes of Jesus to see the faint and weary "sheep having no shepherd".