

*Andy's letter continued from front page*

**6. Normalcy:** It takes a while to get used to hopping in your car, driving on the other side of the road while dodging pigs, monkeys, cows, rickshaws, mopeds, pedestrians, and angry taxi drivers. Sometimes it feels like everything is different.

**7. Language:** The ability to communicate is something that we take for granted. To be an effective missionary, serious language study is required. Abby and I witnessed the fruit of thousands of hours of language study, as the couples we visited spoke fluently.

I am thankful that those whom we visited have obeyed God's call in their lives to take up their cross and sacrificially follow Him.

**New Era of Missions:** There once was a day in which Christians could go to other countries, travel around sharing the gospel, teaching the Bible, and planting churches. But few countries issue missionary visas for such purposes nowadays. Further, such methodology often relied on colonial advantages enjoyed by Westerners and, sadly, produced many who converted to Westernism rather than becoming followers of Jesus. Today, we are in a new era of missions in which skilled workers with legitimate jobs must choose to live in countries which are unreached for the gospel in order to make disciples. Those who are called to be cross-cultural missionaries should certainly have a strong understanding of the Bible, but should also seek to sharpen some professional skill such as IT-expertise, medicine, business management, or education. One overseas worker we met with spent four years getting theological training (M.Div from Trinity Evangelical Seminary), which he said has been extremely helpful to him on the field. Yet, he added that his years spent as a computer programmer for a large American corporation have been just as valuable to him in being able to bring expertise and legitimacy to the mission field.

**Team Unity:** A third observation made from our time overseas is that team unity (between missionaries working in the same city or with the same organization) takes a lot of work and is a constant matter for prayer. Some common sources of disunity in between overseas workers are:

**1. Different Philosophies of Ministry:** Say you run a business overseas, but are primarily there to make disciples in an unreached people group. It is easy to be over-run by the demands of the business, thus veering you off-track of your primary reason for being there. Yet, others spend lots of time

meeting with people and disciple-making, but have very little legitimacy to their business visa. When those two philosophies of ministry wind up on the same team, it's tough to work together.

**2. Personalities:** This is a generalization, but it seems to me that many missionaries are strong, intense, type-A sorts of people. This is a strength that helped the missionary make the difficult call of going overseas in the first place, and it is a strength that helps them endure much difficulty on the field. Yet, sometimes on a team of overseas workers there are too many cooks in the kitchen, who have differing visions for the ministry. Overseas, these missionaries may be the only believers in a city of hundreds of thousands, so it's inevitable and necessary that they continue to see one another and in some respect, work together. Close proximity of big personalities can be an opportunity for spiritual growth, but often it's a relational clash.

**3. Different Expectations** Another source of disunity among teams is varying views of the husband and wife roles while on the field. Some couples go overseas with the expressed intent that both the husband and wife will be very involved in out-of-the-house disciple making. Others go with a view that the husband will be leading the charge, and the wife's primary role for a decade or so will be to be in the home, raising and schooling the children, and supporting the ministry of the husband. Both viewpoints are permissible, but when you're on a team overseas with someone with a completely different view of ministry and its expectations, it can cause much strain through perceived or actual judgmentalism.

**4. Missionary Inter-action:** Another source of disunity is how much time missionaries spend investing in relationships with other missionaries on the field. The reality is that they didn't move across the globe to hang out with other Americans or Christians. Yet, such fellowship is healthy and needed. The problem comes when some missionaries who are well adjusted to life on the field don't need much relational input from American Christians, while others are struggling and really need more relationship with like-minded believers. The former can feel frustrated by the duty-bound relationship which takes them away from their purpose, while the latter can feel neglected and unloved.

**5. Forced Friendships:** Another source of disunity is the fact that overseas workers feel forced to be friends. As believers,

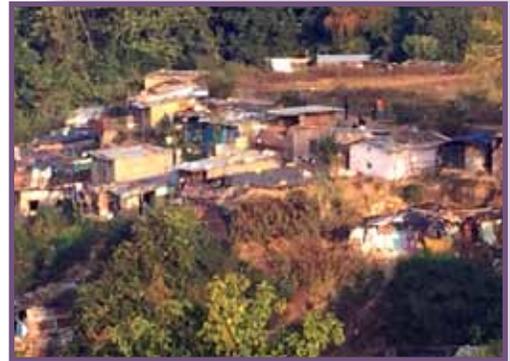
we are to strive to love one another, to live at peace with each other. But let's face it, some people just don't "click." Even when there's no sin or ill-will toward one another, some people just have very different interests, temperaments, and ways of doing life. Here in America, we'd call it a success in the church if people who didn't "click" were kind to one another and served one another lovingly, but ultimately, deep friendships would probably be found with those who shared common interests. On the mission field—at least for the first few years—there is no other relational option. If someone on your team is completely different than you, by the grace of God you may be able to have a kind, loving relationship. But it's still not going to feel the same as some of the great friends you had back home who you connected with, laughed with, and felt completely at peace with.

While I'm happy to report that both couples we visited were doing well in many ways, the aforementioned snares are ever present. Let's be a church who prays diligently for the endurance, the zeal, and the holiness of our overseas partners in order that through them, many might know Jesus Christ as Lord.

*Grace and peace,  
Andy*

### North Africa

### India



Details of pictures are omitted for security purposes.