

# Reflections at 37,000 Feet

September 2011

Dear Friends and Prayer Partners,

Some people don't like long plane flights. For me, however, such flights – like this 13-hour flight to the US for furlough – is really a joy!

Compared to the nearly-equally-long bus trip from Bicol to Manila preceding this trip, this plane flight is a luxury in service and comfort! But more than that, this kind of trip gives me a much needed chance to sit back and with no interruptions simply reflect – reflect on what God has done, on what He is saying, and on what is next. And truly after these last three years of ministry in the Philippines, there is a lot upon which to reflect!

As the flight began and the plane launched from the Manila airport, my first reflections soared as well to the amazing way that God had also launched so many new works on the islands during the past three years. A new church on San Miguel Island (actually the spin off of our Santicon fellowship when I left for furlough in 2008), a new agricultural development ministry, three new livelihoods involving export to the US and Singapore, internship for youth in our churches, a mission outreach to the neighboring province of Sorsogon, and now a low-power FM radio station as well – these six new ministries more than doubled our existing ones! How did that happen so fast?!



*Reflecting at 37,000 feet – and writing this newsletter!*

As the plane climbed higher and turbulently pierced through the Pacific Ocean clouds, my reflections also turned to the turbulence and spiritual warfare experienced over my last three years, honestly some rather intense. There seems no such thing as an ascent without turbulence, and it hit us in many ways these past years. Some was simply technical inconveniences, like radio equipment problems that delayed our radio ministry for six months. Some was disheartening discipline problems with people in the church, even a couple leaders. Most was the stress of too few workers. While God was opening more doors for ministry, our ministry staff actually decreased in number. In fact, the nine ministries in which Faith in Action engaged these past years was handled by only 5 staff (half part-time), a few youth interns and some temporary workers. Honestly I am amazed that after three years we who remain are all still standing!

The plane has now exited the clouds and leveled out at 37,000 feet. As it does so, so too do my meditations rise upward to the Lord who made these last three years possible. They were amazing years – amazing in the doors opened for us, sobering in the spiritual warfare through which we passed, deepening in the lessons gleaned through it all. And yet I shouldn't really be surprised at what we experienced. Didn't Jesus promise to build His church but also hint at the same time that the gates of hell would try to prevail against it? Didn't He promise to give us power to be witnesses even though the laborers would always be few? Didn't He promise to open doors that no one could shut and to fulfill plans formed long ago? Truly these past years have been a testimony to the truth of God's word and of His faithfulness to His promises.

With every launching there is of course also a landing, and as the US now grows closer, my reflections turn as well to what is ahead, particularly to the chance to see many of you who have been such a big part of the ministry over these past three years. God has taught me many times that success in His work is always a team effort, with many people playing unique and important roles in a common work. And I know that it has been the prayers, encouragement, and support of so many of you that have helped me meet head on the opportunities – and struggles – of the past years. You have been an amazing blessing to me, and a definite way in which God has shown me His presence and concern.

Though my furlough is shorter than normal – just until mid-December – I do look forward to seeing as many of you as I can while in the US, to share my reflections upon what God has – and is – doing in my life and to hear as well what He is doing in yours. He is good, and it is truly a joy to think on Him. May we all do more of that. Hope to see you soon!

With heart turned toward Jesus,

*Dave*  
David Matthews

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## Looking Upward for Help

One of the desires God has as we meditate upon Him, is that we also learn to trust Him enough to cast all of our cares and needs upon Him. Here are a few key areas in the island ministry that could definitely use intercession. Thanks so much to those of you who wish to be a part of this important work of prayer!

1. **Furlough** – my furlough will take me, Lord willing to six different states and involve a lot of plane and car travel. Please pray for God’s protection through it all. Pray that the Lord will use me as a blessing in this country and even open doors for me to share His love and good news to those who don’t know Him here. Also somehow in the midst of all the rush, may this furlough also offer some additional time for me to stop and reflect.
2. **Remaining staff** – if we were understaffed on the field while I was there, we are even more so now! Please pray for Jonathan and Sherell, who are overseeing the campsite projects, Leo and Rudy, who are handling the churches, Ana, who is overseeing much ministry in northern San Miguel, and Hanilyn, Babeth, and Freddie, our youth interns who are mostly involved in the radio and agriculture ministries. May God grant them all the grace they need to continue the work fruitfully over the next 3 months.
3. **Home Fellowship Groups** – please pray for Ramir, Silverino, Jessie, Ceasar, and Michael – five men who have stepped forward to lead weekly home fellowship groups and who stand as potential future elders. As with our other staff please pray that God will give them wisdom and the filling of His Spirit during this time.
4. **Radio ministry** – these next 3 months could be decisive as to whether or not we can get licensed under Far East Broadcasting Company. Please pray that God will grant us favor both with FEBC and the Philippine National Telecommunications Commission if this is His will. Please also pray that I can complete the some 120 radio recordings needed to keep me on the air still twice each day while I am gone (is that possible?).
5. **Plans for the future** – I have long been sensing that God may be moving the island ministry to a transition but not sure how or when. Please pray that this time in the US will be a good time for seeking God’s mind better concerning any changes He may want in the ministry once I return.

Thanks so much for your prayers! I know they are so critical to success in the work we are doing. Thank you for being a big part of the ministry in this way!

For more information about the ministry in the Philippines, feel free to visit:

**[www.fianews.wordpress.com](http://www.fianews.wordpress.com)**

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