

December 2015

This year, BTEA celebrates 31 years of ministry! BTEA was God's idea. I always like to make it clear that God is "the brains of this outfit." He is the sustainer and provider and receives all credit for the countless "God stories" He has written over the years. In future letters, I will deal with other aspects of our ministry; but, since many who receive our letters were not part of BTEA 30 years ago, this letter focuses on some highlights from the early years.

In January 1985, I went on a mission trip to the Philippines with 80 other pastors. I like to call it "the divine sting operation." God wove together a remarkable series of events to introduce me to the Filipino people, who are unusually responsive to Americans and, more importantly, to the Gospel. Since college, my passion has been to lead people to the saving knowledge of Jesus. I have NEVER gotten over the amazing responsiveness of Filipinos to the Gospel, often on the first hearing.

After I returned from that 18-day trip, I picked up where I left off, preaching through Luke. It "so happened" that my next passage in the series was Luke 10. The second verse reads: "The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few; therefore pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." I ended my sermon by praying that God would send workers to the incredible harvest in the Philippines. A few weeks later, I traveled to preach in another state, and God spoke to me in a voice louder than audible, "You go!" I responded, "Ok, ok! I'll go; I'll go!" On the same night, in Jacksonville, God also called Pam. When I returned home to tell her that our family would soon begin a new adventure, she already knew. After 30 years, I still sign my letters, "In the harvest."

I sought wise counsel and told my church about God's call. I then formed a board of godly men. Most of them still serve with me. We started the Bob Tebow Evangelistic Association, a 501(c)(3) corporation. Fundraising was a logical concern, but I have always been convinced that if God called me to go, He would be faithful to provide. In October of that same year, Pam and I, and our four children, ages 9,7,4, and 1, left for the Philippines.

The year 1985 was a turbulent time throughout the Philippines, with constant political uprisings. Even the Filipinos considered the Southern Island of Mindanao, where we would live, to be like the "Wild West." My only promise to our family was a flushing toilet in our home. When the home I secured on an earlier trip did not meet that requirement, Pam and our four children lived in the home of a Filipino family for a month, while I preached on another island. The harvest was great but so were the challenges. I could not contact my family but prayed I would arrive home in time for Christmas. While I trusted God for the harvest, Pam and the children were learning how to trust Him for a home and life in a very different environment. Meanwhile, they bonded with their Filipino hosts, who provided a crash course in the culture. An influential man in the local church observed our family's efforts to adjust and talked his friend (who became a Christian while reading a Gideon Bible in a hotel) into renting his home to Pam.



**Our Christmas Family Photo: Bob, Pam, Christy, Katie, Robby, Peter, and Timmy (in the womb).**

The day before Christmas, I finally returned home on a slow boat and found my sweet family settled in a home (with a flushing toilet and more) that God graciously provided. It was one of our most memorable Christmases and a favorite "God story."

The next Christmas was also memorable but for a different reason. A few months earlier, while I was preaching in a remote village, God broke my heart over the abortions taking place in America. As I wept over those babies, I cried out to the Lord that if He wanted another preacher in the world, He could give him to me: "Give us Timothy, and we will raise him to be a preacher." Our family prayed for Timothy, which means "Honoring God." Our prayer was answered, but Pam faced a very difficult pregnancy. A few days before Christmas, the doctor advised her to abort in order to save her life. We refused, and Pam received no more medical treatment. Months before, she suffered a life threatening case of amoebic dysentery, and doctors speculated that the medicine could have caused the pregnancy complications. Pam was too sick to travel until the end of her pregnancy, when our family quickly relocated to Manila for medical help. In August 1987, I stood next to the doctor when our youngest son Timmy was born. "He is a miracle baby," the doctor exclaimed, because only a shred of the placenta was attached. This is our favorite "God story!"

But there was more. A week after Timmy was born, Pam had emergency surgery for an unusual cyst that our American trained OBGYN discovered. If we had remained in Mindanao the doctor was certain she would have died from uterine shock. God writes the best stories.

Not only did my wife and son thrive because of the forced move to Manila, the harvest increased because the rest of the country became more accessible. I began to travel regularly to preach throughout the Philippines. My national staff grew, and I partnered with other missionaries and churches for evangelism and church planting.

During the early years of BTEA, God taught me how to do effective evangelism. The plan was to bring the Gospel to the people and not expect the people to attend an outreach event. Shortly after we arrived in the Philippines, Pam made a homemade screen that I tied between two coconut trees. I used a projector to show the "Jesus film," which drew most of the villagers to the "only show in town." I preached the Gospel between the reels, and multitudes came to Christ. One of my favorite "God stories" occurred when I arrived at the home of my staff member Bert, with plans to preach in a certain village. He told me, "They said we can never start a church there." My response was, "That's a challenge to our God." So we went there that night to have a film showing, but a local, very loud outdoor disco competed for the attention of the villagers. I knew that our God was bigger than that disco. I prayed that He would silence the competition. Instantly, there was an electricity blackout in the entire region, which stopped the lights and music. We cranked up our generator, and the crowd left the disco for the movie about the life of Christ. That night, 120 Filipinos placed their faith in Him, and a new church was started. As I was packing the equipment, I vividly remember two elderly ladies following me around. Bert explained, "They just want to thank you because now they have eternal life."

From 1985 to 1990, we were blessed with many more "God stories." We witnessed over 30,000 people make public decisions to trust Jesus alone for their salvation and planted over 100 churches. And there is much more to follow in future letters...

In the harvest,  
Bob



**Bob Tebow baptizing new Filipino believer in 1986**