

SRI LANKA 2011

I met Leslie, Shanthi and the Calvary team almost ten years ago! Both Leslie and I had more hair back then! When you meet someone who is an inspiration, the natural thing to do is to introduce them to the rest of your family. That is one of the main reasons we have taken teams out to Sri Lanka. Our desire is for more of the City Church family to connect with Leslie and his team. Fresh passion is caught not taught - rubbing shoulders with Christians in another culture can be such an encouragement. It is such a great experience. I think anyone that has visited the Matthews have returned encouraged, spiritually challenged and inspired by the Calvary Family in Jaffna. Their Sacrifice, long suffering, sense of call and determination to make a difference in their community certainly gets under your skin.

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The Team: They were brilliant! Two weeks living in each others' pockets can be a challenge for anyone, but amazingly there was not one cross word! Everyone got stuck in with no complaints about the long journeys or curry twice a day. In fact we had great fun and some very precious team times. It was pretty clear God spoke to a number of us personally. It was a pleasure to see the team really go for it. Encouraging others, speaking and leading worship, eating everything they were given. Steve even entered a race bare foot - that's commitment! I guess now that we are home the challenge for us all will be implementing those things that the Lord highlighted while we were out there. **James:** "For me it's always wonderful spending time with Leslie, Shanthi and their team. Eating together and simply sharing life.

The more we do that, the more rubs off. I have a lot to learn about what it means to be part of a sacrificial community. To live and breathe humility and kindness. Spending time with these guys makes you want to be a better person and a more devoted follower of Jesus, thank you Lord for the Calvary family, what a wonderful inspiration."



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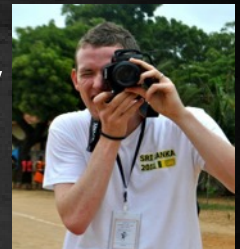
Youth Camp: We ran various seminars throughout the camp which focused on areas of leadership, worship, sex and relationships and spiritual gifts to name but a few. These workshops were a great opportunity for interaction and cross-cultural learning for both sides, and they also allowed for honest and open discussions. We had the opportunity to pray for individuals to encourage them as they were sent back out to their respective church groups.



The worship times were certainly very different to what we experience back home, with lots of noise, shouts and singing. Despite the differences, you could sense one thing that was so clear: the youth of Sri Lanka wanted nothing more than to meet with God! There was a hunger and a rawness about their worship. You knew that God meant so much to them. They were crying out for more of him and less of them.

Thomas on the Youth Camp:

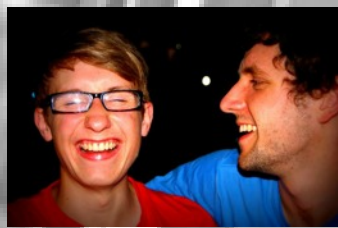
"On the second evening of the camp, we witnessed something remarkable that will hold a lasting image in my mind. We had a call for anyone who wanted to recon-



nect with God and give him everything for their country. We saw around 100 young people come to the front and cry out for Sri Lanka. For their friends, family colleagues that don't know God and for a radical movement of God's Spirit. It was a very special moment!"



Steve on Church Services: 'It was certainly a cross-cultural experience! To be honest I struggled initially, a different language and a different format to what I have grown used to here at City Church. I



realised that we are so used to worshipping with our minds and understanding what we are singing, it was a challenge to enter into worship from the heart and just let your spirit worship God. It has challenged me not to go through the motions but to really think about the words we sing.

Having an opportunity to speak was good fun but I found being translated a little strange. I was worried about my accent being hard to understand, but I think it went well. Leslie did a brilliant job translating and I'm sure he made it sound better than it really was. I spent an afternoon planning what to say, but just got the sense that God wanted to do something else. I learned that can be the nature of missions – flexibility and adapting to different situations. I did feel a bit unworthy to do it when I arrived but glad I was stretched, I have so much to learn!"

Dave's thoughts: "One of the biggest highlights for me was spending time with the boys at the Bethshalom boys' home, just playing and having a laugh with them was amazing. I was really touched by the way they looked out for each other and how they were so willing to welcome us and befriend us straight away. Leaving them was hard but I was so happy to see how much they're cared for and loved by Rushani and Justin.



The whole attitude of the Sri Lankan people is so loving and hospitable, the way they served us and each other was incredible. That really stood out to me. The thing that impacted me most was the way they hungered for God and for his presence. There was a bit of hype

sometimes- they do things differently, but you could see a genuine longing for more of God. This has been challenging for me as I want to be in a position where I desire God with that intensity!

God is full of surprises! One of the most significant moment for me during the trip was during a team prayer time where one of the team got a word for me which was spot on. Through this I had an experience of God's power in a way I've never felt before. I lost control of myself. I felt like God was forcibly removing things from my heart which needed to be removed and burdens that I had carried for too long. And after I felt an incredible lightness, a new freedom and a sense of real empowerment from God and that through him all things were possible. It was great to serve, and amazing to receive as well." Dave

Amy on Justin's Story: "I had a great chat with Justin who runs the Bethshalom Boy's Home with his wife. When he was at school he wanted to be a doctor but his family ran into some financial difficulty which meant that he couldn't finish his studies. At this time the Lord told him that he was going to go to England, Justin was pretty surprised and nothing happened for 10 years. After 10 years someone told him about a theology school in England. He applied for a scholarship for one year at the school with the help of his pastor. The school offered 2 years! God came through with a scholarship as well, (the scholarship not only covered his fees but all living costs too!) All the paperwork was paid for through the grace of God. So God totally had a plan for Justin and came through on all His promises!



The love that Justin and Rushani show the boys is stunning and evident in the way that the boys interact. They don't hold back even when they know that they might not see the visitors again. The sense of community and love wasn't just evident at the Bethshalom centre but through all the people I met.



Leslie and Shanthi, all the church leaders, those that helped in the churches and youth camp. We talk about community a lot amongst my friends, and at City Church. We do it fairly well...but we can learn so much more about what it means to live in community from the people we met in Sri Lanka."



An exert from Abi's novel: "I went to Pastor Amos' church on the first Sunday. Men, women, grannies, babies all squashed into a small building. There were about 30 inside and 20 sitting outside by the door. I was so excited to go back as I went there last year too. I so enjoyed going on my own and being thrown in the deep end. After some Tamal singing Pastor Chris translated for me. I spoke about running into God's presence, not away from it, and about how God's presence leads us into dark places to minister. We prayed for people and it was clear that the Holy Spirit was causing issues to surface. Pastor Amos and Chris got round people who responded and spoke over them in power until they stopped manifesting. The pastors love their flock so much, they show so much gentle compassion to the oldest granny and the sickest baby. I was loving praying for people when Johnson the worship leader tapped me on the shoulder and said "Abi, Abi - the young people are outside waiting for you, you must do our youth programme now!!!" That was a surprise! I went outside and there were about 30 young people sitting in a circle waiting for me, I had to think on my feet super quick. Trying to think of what was relevant, I told the story about how I started a SU at my school despite opposition from my friends, and did a game. I prayed for heaps of young girls, and their female youth leader. The young people are so passionate about ministry. Then Amos showed me to a 50 year old car which was my sweet ride back to the main Calvary Church. On the way we stopped for about 45 minutes to pick up some sand! I wasn't sure if the car would make it back to the church with the additional weight! Halfway there on the main road my door flung open, no biggie... That's Sri Lanka - always an adventure. Amos told me his vision to build a bigger church building for 1,000 on the land that someone had donated for the church. He wants to see so many people leave their old religion behind, and become Christians. He asked me to come back for longer next time because there is so much work needed to be done ministering to people. I would love to..."



Beth on Bethshalom Boy's Home:

"What is so striking about the Bethshalom Home is the pure joy that is so evidently in all of the boys hearts. They have so much energy and are happy, healthy little boys, living a childhood that is so full of love. They love and look out for each other, even by doing small things like teaching each other how to play cards. They immediately accepted us into their home and family, and showed us kindness from the word go. Their daily schedule over the Summer includes studying, play, bible study, chores etc. They are so keen to serve each other and learn. Some of the boys' stories and back-grounds are more than heartbreaking and without the work that Justin and Rushani do, they would be in entirely different situations.. But that just makes the boys' joy and love for Jesus all the more inspiring. It was such a privilege to meet the boys at the Bethshalom Centre and witness them being shaped into men of God."



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One couple told Leslie and Shanthi that they wanted to do a pioneering work in a Hindu village, so they were sent out after a year at bible college to start a church. I went there on my own to share and pray for them, there were about 20 people in the tiny church in the middle of a very poor rural village. I talked about God healing our hearts as well as our bodies and about loving each other as family. I asked to pray for people who had broken hearts from bereavement and lots came forward. Many from Hindu backgrounds came for prayer, lots of kids with legs so weak that they couldn't walk. Their grandmothers carried them to church to get prayer for healing. At the end the leaders stayed behind to drink fizzy juice with me. It was four of them, Pastor Sanjeev and his wife, a 22 year old girl who was responsible for ministering to the women in the village, and another male elder, whose wife was too sick to come to church. We prayed for his wife. The 22 year old told me she struggled to get to the village to minister to the women there because she didn't have any transport. The little church needed a vehicle of some kind, so we gave some of our team budget towards buying them a trishaw or motorbike. This 22 year old girl was just like me."