

Hello my friends. I want to thank you for joining me today @ the PUNLA Coffee Table. I want to share a PUNLA Back Story. Today I want to give the Back Story on our Bright Futures Programs and Health-Harvest-Hope Missions.

**Let me start with a prayer.**

Now, Our entire ministry has been a miracle of God. We are blessed to participate with God, using the things He has given us to steward, like money, talents, time and energy for His purposes. This is the abundant life He promises. A full life, a wonderful life of service to others in the name of King Jesus.

But this is not how we started our ministry. To be quite honest, in the beginning we didn't get it. We started PUNLA for two reasons, one I liked the tax benefits and two we could do some stuff in my wife's homeland. I'm not sure what are motives really were. Originally, we thought we would show up once a year or every other year and conduct a medical mission. We'd feel good about ourselves, the people we helped would feel good about us. And oh yeah, we would include God in our plans. Oops. Did I say that out loud? Sadly and arrogantly, we started poorly.

And in June 2015, we conducted our first official medical mission in hanawan Ocampo Philippines. Judy's sister recruited 3 people to act as our evangelist to tell the Gospel to the waiting people. That was our big, add God to our plans plan. Now understand my wife's family had done medical missions before several times. So, we knew what to do. Or we thought. But this time we "add God to our plan". And the world started fighting back. We had trouble with volunteers and medicine, we had fights among ourselves. It was different. But thought came to my wife and her sisters Joy and Annie, now what? We told people about God, now what? Where do they go now? In that moment, we realized we could not just add God to our plan, God was the plan. We need to add ourselves to God's plan. More importantly, we need to get onboard with God's plans and stop thinking we were doing things for God but that God was letting us be part of his Plan. His bigger, better plan. And off we went, and we are still growing and listening and letting God lead, while we follow.

Now I have to be honest, it was not easy. We humans sometimes muck it up. But even though we had fights and disagreements, we kept focused on letting God be in charge. Over time we recognized, people don't need hand outs but hand ups. So, what does God want us to do.

First came Health-Harvest-Hope Missions. We named our mission trips this because Health was for medical missions but it was more. We cared about the health of the body but also the spiritual health of the soul. Harvest was for growing health food through gardening and agriculture but now it was more. We wanted people to reap a harvest of health food they grew themselves but also, we saw that the people were yearning for God, so the harvest was ripe for souls. Then Hope. We got this one right from the start. Hope can only come from God. We had the opportunity to partner with God to show people halfway around the world hope. God loves them and that's why we

came. And the world fought us harder and harder and harder. But now we understood why. The more we made it about God and not ourselves the more ideas flooding our minds with God's plans.

Which is where Bright Futures came from. As God put ideas and plans in our minds, we look for people doing those things we could help. But we found no one, God had put it on our hearts, it was us. We were the one God had planned to "do something". So, we said yes and yes and how and why but yes. Over and over again. We meant one pastor, Pastor Nelson near our home in Bicol, then 4 pastors, then 11 pastors, then over the year many pastors more than fifty church throughout Bicol now consider us partners in their work. We believe we are called by God to help equip these men of God to reach their communities for Christ.

So, over the years as ideas were given to us by God, the Bright Futures programs evolved.

Program 1: Nutrition. We train and educate people about healthy eating, gardening, and specific food to address malnutrition, diabetes, high cholesterol and other health problems through healthy eating.

Program 2: Primary School. This has included school visits, vacation bible school. We are currently developing seminars and modules for high school and senior high school students for career counseling, professional communication, Godly living, and others.

Program 3: College. I love this program because I do most of the student communications. We provide scholarships, computer labs, student forums and camps and other support to help and guide college students with their studies and spiritual growth.

Program 4: Medical. We have done medica missions, medicine distributions, diagnostic testing, seminars and more. As God urges us, we say yes. Most recently with the COVID-19 pandemic. Food and medicines were in short supply especially in the province of Bicol. PUNLA gave funds for food when God said feed my sheep and found wholesale medicine supplier to get vital medicines to our churches, even when medicine was not available in local pharmacies. God's Plan not ours and He makes it happen according to His will.

Program 5: Vocational. We saw early on that there was a financial barrier that those in extreme poverty could not bridge. Many jobs overseas pay much better than local jobs but the only way to get these jobs was to pay agencies. The fees were just beyond what most could pay sometimes more than the household income for a year. We stepped in with zero interest loans to help pay the fees, then those we helped repay during their assignments overseas so we can help others.

Program 6: EcoStim or Economic Stimulus. We saw that these churches were so poor. And the members were so poor barely surviving day to day. So how do we help. God

said businesses. I thought I'd start businesses and employ people but then I could only help a few and I would be the one benefiting. God had a better plan. Zero interest loans for start up capital so others could start businesses. We have helped to start 18 businesses to date. Things from pineapples, wig making, crab meat processing and construction supplies.

Program 7: Ministries. When we first meant our partner churches, few had permanent concrete buildings which could withstand the severe weather. In case you don't know the Philippines is hit by more than 20 typhoons every year and the region we work on is regularly hit by super typhoons the wipe out crops, buildings and kill people every year. Many we work with have all of the little they have washed away often. They are always starting over and over again. Even our churches would be washed or blown away. So God said do something, so we say yes, and over the years we have helped through zero interest loans and grants to build or renovate 16 churches and provide materials and equipment to many more. Now many of our partners have concrete structures which are safe havens for their communities during storms.

God is working every day. Don't miss it.

We have been blessed by God to be part of His plan. His bigger, better plan. Today we also have mission and programs here in America. As God urges us, we say yes. Then okay Lord, what do you want us to do next?

This verse from 1 John 3:18 has become a slogan for us. "let us not love merely in word and speech but in action and in truth." Amen.

### **Let's Pray**

Thanks for joining me today for a PUNLA Back Story @ the Coffee Table. Hope to see you next time @ the PUNLA Coffee Table. Trust God with everything and He will direct your steps. What a great promise from God. God bless.