

“Those who believe in God can never in a way be sure of him again. Once they have seen him in a stable, they can never be sure where he will appear or to what lengths he will go or to what ludicrous depths of self-humiliation he will descend in his wild pursuit of man...”

--Fredrick Buechner



Rich Mullins once described it as “the reckless raging fury that they call the love of God.” That’s this week’s topic for the Discipleship Training School: understanding that the Christian life is not about religion at all, but about relationship—about a passionate God whose heart is broken by his longing for intimacy with us...not as we should be, but as we are.

This group is already almost through with its classroom phase, and the Caribbean Mercy is reaching the end of this season’s resupply tour, which has taken us to Maryland, North Carolina (left), and now Mississippi. After the holidays we’ll sail back down to the Dominican Republic. The DTS

students (right) are excited about finally getting out into some more hands-on situations, though they’ve already been out on their own time finding ways to minister to people in the U.S. cities we’ve visited. I suspect they’re also excited about the prospect of being warm again.



When we get to the Dominican Republic, the DTS will have three more weeks of preparation and classroom time; then, at the beginning of February, I will be taking them deeper inland on a month-long outreach away from the ship. There are many areas of physical need all over the country, from Haitian refugee work to local orphanages to community development, and we’ve had the students asking God about it regularly to see where he’ll direct them. The other staff and I purposely haven’t told them our options yet, but wherever we choose to go, it’s a given that there will be great need—physical, spiritual, or both.

A survey of DTS programs worldwide once found that something like eighty percent of the growth and change that happens in people’s lives takes place not in the “learning” phase of the school, but on the outreach. They’ll be out of their comfort zones, out of their various cultures, face to face with a hurting world. More than that, they’ll be face to face with each other and with themselves in a way many will have never experienced before. Even on our small ship, you can find places to hide, but not on an outreach. Unity



becomes a matter of intentional effort, and anything that’s accomplished outside is only a factor of it.

So far, this group has done very well with that. Actually, one short-term crew member who had arrived as something of a seeker, feeling far from God, was drawn in by what he described as the incredible love and peace he saw in the crew, especially as he quietly watched the DTS interact. Upon his departure after our stop in Wilmington (left), he was visibly moved, saying he had a lot to think about and he thought he’d be back. I wish for you, too, that kind of total peace this Christmas.

Jeremy