

and the Indian people. I did promise Sam & Susannah that I would make the trip to India at least one time in the future . . . maybe in 2011?

As I continue to process our time together, I am hoping to unpack more of the ways God has used this opportunity to teach me and to change me! For those of you who had the privilege to meet them, I am sure you are feeling the same way.

Thank you for your prayers, love and support many of you show to us each day! Serving together - Erin Valdes rodeooo@me.com (503) 708-1139

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The Berean Way

2009 Q4 Report

Happy Thanksgiving everyone! What a wonderful year we have experienced as God continues to allow us to be a part of His master plan. What have you been thankful for?

Our scheduled trip to India last month had been planned since 2008. But as October approached, I felt an overwhelming need to change directions. After much prayer, I called our partner, Rev. Sam Apollos, and invited him to bring his family to Portland instead. I thought it would also be beneficial to have them communicate our story and to meet our US supporters.

Little did we know, the impact that Sam, Susannah and Jehohanah would have on all of us! The rest of the story comes from my wife's point of view. Please enjoy . . . Jeff

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As I prepared myself to share about having Sam, Susannah and Jehohanah here for over two weeks in October, I just sat there and thought, "How will I ever be able to write into words what I have experienced?"

Initially, I was a bit nervous about having them come. I had met Sam before. I already loved and trusted this man of God whom we have had the privilege of partnering together in ministry for the past 7 years.



But, I had not yet met Susannah. And knowing she had never been outside of India before made me very nervous about "introducing" her into our American culture.

I could only imagine how *different* the two of us really were!

The moment I met her I remember thinking, "we speak different languages, we have different cultures and we may not understand each other but she loves Jesus and her family, just like me."

Only a few short weeks before, we were praying that God would open the doors for their entire family to make the journey to visit the United States. And finally that day was here! As we left the airport with our guests, it was fun to watch Susannah's eyes open to how different our world is here.



Our streets are clean and quiet and the traffic is minimal to say the least. The animals are not competing with the cars for road space and everything is clean and smells good.

Initially, Susannah was shy. She was not confident in her English (even though she knows it very well). She kept wanting Sam to translate for her. He gave her a bit of grace at first but then in his loving way told her she would have to just dive in and embrace our language and our culture! And she did!

The first few days we smiled as we watched the kids play next to one another without talking or interacting much. By the time the first week was over, they were enjoying each other and also disagreeing like siblings do. It was wonderful to be here to love on Jehohanan and to watch him grow each day. His English quickly improved and I got to see him learn how to interact with his "American brother and sisters"☺

We took advantage of the opportunities to meet with women for coffee, speak at Bible study groups and have people over in our home. Susannah loved to teach us a little "Indian cooking". It was amazing to watch her come out of her shell more and more every day.

I learned so much about her life as a child and being rejected from her mother. She

shared how her and Sam's marriage was "prearranged" and how it grew into a deep love for one another.

Susannah became more open about her relationship with Sam. To watch the two of them share, laugh and enjoy each other was just a glimpse of God's goodness to them. By the end of the trip, we even had her posing for photos wearing her new American clothes.

She grew to deeply love a few older women that took some time and invested in her over the two weeks. They showed her love, attention and godly counsel that she never had received from a "mom" before. God used each of those experiences in her life to heal some old hurts and to allow us to love her.

She shared more details into the loss of their 12-day old son back in 2007. And how it affected her faith, which was challenged by fears of being unable to have another child since. (Many of you might remember going through that experience with them.)

But then we also had the privilege of meeting with a wonderful friend of mine. She is a Christian OB-GYN doctor who rearranged her personal time to meet with Sam & Susannah. She shared some medical insight, personal encouragement and prayed with them. What an awesome experience when the body of Christ works like that!

There are many other stories that I would like to share with you if space and time allowed. It brings a smile to my face whenever I look back on our time together.

We look expectantly into the future. Jeff returns to India in February, but when will God bring Susannah and me back together?

How can God bring two separate families who live across the world from one another together with different languages, different cultures but one heart together for ministry?

I will never forget our time together! It has opened my heart in a new way to love India