

THE THOMAS FAMILY

Serving together since 2016 • Panama

"But the person who trusts in the Lord will be blessed. The Lord will show him that he can be trusted. He will be strong, like a tree planted near water that sends its roots by a stream. It is not afraid when the days are hot; its leaves are always green. It does not worry in a year when no rain comes; it always produces fruit."
-Jeremiah 17:7-8 (NCV)

God Testing the Waters of Faith

As this new year continues, God has His perfect (though sometimes challenging) ways of fine-tuning and refining our faith further in Him. On the website crossway.org, I read this regarding this month's Bible verse (Jeremiah 17:7-8): "Only trust in God motivates confident obedience in times of crisis. [And] a tree planted by water means it is settled with resources no matter what happens. A perfect contrast to the 'shrub in the desert' (Jer. 17:6)." I just love how that explanation is worded. To trust Him, to obey Him, to stand firm in Him, all require a continual choice, a process of repeatedly saying, "Yes, Lord, no matter what happens, my tree and roots are planted in You and You alone."

Sometimes, however, circumstances come up that can really shake our foundation to its core where fear and anxiety come in trying to infiltrate our faith in Him. I recently had a trying time when I was taking care of Noah and Esther Lily alone while Stephen and Ezra were traveling and fundraising for 12 days. My son Noah had been experiencing some issues with his teachers and a classmate and he was having an incredibly difficult time wanting to go to school. During the hardest days I prayed with desperation and would plead for God's help constantly. Through the help of the Holy Spirit, it dawned on me that although I was going to God for help, I was pleading the same thing over and over. My prayers were about getting my trial fixed, and I realized I wasn't allowing myself to stop, slow down, and consciously choose to trust that the Lord would take care of this situation in His perfect ways and timing. Just as Isaiah 48:10-12 (NCV) says, "I have made you pure, but not by fire, as silver is made pure. I have purified you by giving you troubles." It may not

be easy, but let us rejoice for we are the few who have chosen the narrow road, and we can be seen like Olympians who are being challenged to get stronger in all areas of our lives. Brothers and sisters, be encouraged to continue to fight the good fight and choose to plant your feet firmly in Jesus daily, especially when the trials come!

Abraham Project Panama Updates

Recently, we completed the third training by a local Panamanian missionary who specializes in educating local churches and ministries regarding the sensitive, yet necessary, topic of sexual abuse. It has been incredibly insightful and eye-opening for us, especially how this relates to the Panamanian culture. Our team has an opportunity to put this training into practice in mid-April. They will be traveling to an indigenous region of Panama to work with children and adults on topics of child abuse and trauma.



Weekly Monday morning prayer at the Abraham Project Panama (APP) property with our team and our children.

In addition, we have been running around to government agencies, checking on the many requests that we have submitted. Even though there is an allotted number of days that the government offices have to respond, there is no consequence for not sticking to the deadline. So, Stephen and Santiago have spent several days following up, in person, with these agencies.

Thomas Clan Update



Our church hosted the annual 'Parent's Night Out' where volunteers from our church take care of our children in exchange for a donation to help fund local missions while we get to go out on a date!

Our eldest, Noah, who is five now, was having a hard time adjusting back to school from vacation in January, however, we were able to get him changed to another classroom. Our mornings with him getting ready for school have been a day and night change. We are so relieved and grateful that this change has

been so beneficial to our boy. It was hard for us as parents to see his mood and attitude so down and negative, but now he seems to be back to his normal, happy self. All praise be to God!

Our second-born, Ezra, who is three has been rambunctious and lively as are most little boys his age. He and Noah are bonding as brothers more than ever as they can better communicate and play with one another. Even though they still fight from time to time, it's been refreshing to see their friendship strengthen as they work together to accomplish tasks like fighting bad guys (Goliath) or building airports out of blocks. He is still doing homeschool almost daily with me. On week 17 of our curriculum, we are going

over "b" for boats or *barcos* in Spanish. Ezra absolutely loves boats so good thing there are so many stories in the Bible involving boats!

Our baby girl, Esther Lily, who is now 14 months old, is crawling all over the place. Once she got the hang of it, she took off flying! Now we've been trying to motivate her to walk and she seems to have the same attitude she did with crawling at first: no desire to do it! Prayers that she would have the motivation to walk soon would be so appreciated! Also, our girl loves people and loves to show others her cute little smile with her teeth. She loves the outdoors and water, especially going to the pool with her brothers! She has been such a joy and the perfect addition to our family! God handpicked each child for us and we are honored and blessed to have the opportunity and responsibility of parenting these kids to be God-fearing and loving just as our parents did with us!



Partnering Through Prayer

Greta Zwaan said, "Prayer is the means of sustaining a faith that at times can grow weak." Let's join together in partnership to pray and lift each other, especially during times when our faith is tested! How can Stephen and I pray for you?

Finally, we end with this blessing over your life:

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:13).

- Stephen, Kendra, Noah, Ezra, & Esther Lily

Support

Thank you for partnering with **Stephen Jr & Kendra Thomas** in seeing His Kingdom come and His will be done on earth as it is in Heaven! Thank you for your gifts and prayers.

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