

Day 7 Reflection

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At our last team meeting before leaving for Belize, we were asked to write any pre-Belize thoughts in our journals. Because this was my first trip, I had no real expectations aside from our given work tasks.

When I travel in foreign countries I always focus on the sensory experiences of sights, smells, tastes and sounds of the country and its people. I wrote in my journal that I was hoping to learn how the Belizeans worship and make connections through our shared faith in Jesus Christ.

At the Sunday service, we all were roaming the sanctuary to meet and greet the Port Loyola Baptist Church congregation and they with us. For some reason, I decided to go to the totally opposite side of the sanctuary to meet ladies sitting there. It was that decision that resulted in the meeting of my new prayer partner.

Teresita worships with her beautiful daughter and granddaughters. Her inviting smile and spirit embraces you from the moment you greet her. Her whole family welcomed me with love.

That day in our conversation, I discovered that we had one very unique similarity: We are both Blue Star Mothers. A Blue Star family is one in which a family member is active duty in a branch of the U.S. military. A Blue Star Mother knows that the life of her child is not their own, but belongs totally to the U.S. military and that when deployed, your child may give the ultimate sacrifice – their life for our country.

My son is no longer active duty, but my fellow Blue Star moms always say that once a Blue Star, always a Blue Star. Their precious love and prayers have helped me through some of the darkest times of my life, my son's Afghanistan deployment.

With my heart breaking for her, I imagined myself in Teresita's shoes – a Belizean mom sending not one but two sons to serve another country and without the loving support of sisters who have walked down that lonely road. Her oldest son was in the U.S. Army for over 20 years and died in Saudi Arabia from a service-related cancer. He is buried there, but Teresita has the folded U.S. flag placed on his coffin at burial. Her other son is currently stationed at Ft. Bliss in El Paso, Texas.

As we shared on Sunday and Monday, I was impacted by her pride in her sons and a faith in Christ that sustains her. She does not have a Blue Star Mothers group to

lift and support her – she didn't even know what a Blue Star was. I told her how the Blue Star turns to a Gold Star when a family member dies in service to our nation.

Teresita is both Blue and Gold.

We showed each other pictures of our sons, exchanged addresses and I got her daughter's email so that I can send her some Blue Star items. I told her that if her son should ever be stationed at Ft. Jackson, I would step in to be his American mom – but I will



anyway, because Blue Star moms always pray for each other's children.

I made simple beaded bracelets during afternoon crafts on Monday and presented them on Tuesday – my name and hers. I have her name and she has mine. Because of a shared worship experience, we are now promised to each other as prayer partners.

I pray that our connection will grow with immeasurable blessings and, God willing, bring us together again in three years.