NOTE TO TEACHERS: See page 326 for a thank you letter from HCM.

The newly appointed director of HealthCare Ministries, Bob McGurty, lay in a hospital bed in Thailand, wondering whether any of his family had survived. He had lost contact with his wife and sons for several hours after the tsunami hit, and he feared the worst. *Have I lost my entire family?* he wondered. He was desperate for an answer.

Bob and his family had served as missionaries in Bangladesh for fourteen years. After accepting the directorship of HCM, they decided to go back to Bangladesh during Christmas break 2004 to say a final good-bye to all of their friends and churches. Then they planned to take a short vacation on the Island of Phuket (*poo-KET*), Thailand, before returning home. They arrived in Phuket the evening of December 24.

On Christmas day, Bob rented motorcycles so he and his sons could share some riding time together while his wife Twyla spent the day at the beach. Just as they were getting underway, Bob wrecked the bike and fractured a rib. He was rushed to a hospital thirty minutes inland, where he was kept overnight.

On the morning of the 26th, as Twyla helped Bob sit up in bed to eat, Bob felt his bed shake. He mentioned it to Twyla, but she thought it was his imagination. Little did they know that an earthquake was taking place in Indonesia that very moment.

But when Twyla left the hospital to check on the boys, she found the hotel inundated with water, ankle deep in some areas and knee deep in others. Twyla thought perhaps the swimming pool had leaked. Then she heard someone shouting, “Earthquake! Tsunami! Tidal wave!” At that point she remembered Bob’s comment about his bed shaking. Suddenly she realized the crisis they were in.

Twyla ran to the room and told the boys to put their things up on high shelves and get ready to leave the hotel, but the water kept rising. Soon it was waist deep. Then the second wave hit.

Bobby Jr. tried to open the door while Twyla and Joe climbed on the bed. Within seconds the bed started rising as the water level increased. The windows were barred and the door wouldn’t open. They all thought they would surely drown.
As Bob lay in his hospital bed, he wondered whether his family had survived. He could hear lots of noise outside his room, but no one offered any information. He asked a nurse, and she said something about a tsunami. Bob had seen a report on TV about the earthquake in Indonesia, so he thought the hospital was receiving patients from Indonesia.

But as the noise level increased, Bob got out of bed and ventured down the hall. What he saw stunned him. People were screaming and bleeding, many were dying. Finding a nurse who spoke English, Bob asked, “What is happening?”

“We didn’t want to tell you,” she confessed, “because we know your wife went to get your sons. A tsunami has struck, and anyone on the beach has probably died.” For the next five hours, Bob lay in shock, thinking that his family might all be dead.

Finally that evening, his youngest son Joe entered the room. Bob’s heart was in his throat. He couldn’t ask if everything was OK. He couldn’t even manage to say “hi.” The only question he could muster was, “How many are you?” Joe answered, “Dad, we’re all here.” At that moment, Twyla and Bobby stepped in.

They told Bob how they were eventually able to escape the tsunami. They had finally managed to force open the hotel room door. For six hours they kept moving, trying to reach higher land where they could be safe. Two of them lost their flip-flops as they waded through sewage water with debris floating around them. To protect their feet from broken glass and sharp rocks, they made makeshift shoes from pieces of a plastic tarp they found. Along the way, Twyla, a registered nurse, tried to help others who were in need. After finally reaching higher ground, they waited to see what would happen. Several hours later, they decided to try to get to the hospital so the family could be together.

Bob and his family are immensely grateful to be alive—and for the motorcycle accident. If the accident hadn’t happened, they don’t know whether they would be alive today. Twyla had planned on taking an early morning walk on the beach that morning, but instead she wound up with Bob at the hospital. If not for the motorcycle accident, Twyla would have been helpless in the tsunami’s path when it struck full force on the shore.

The McGurty’s lost everything, but they are alive. Their hearts are with those who weren’t as fortunate—the thousands of orphaned children and grieving families.

HealthCare Ministries teams worked closely with the national churches in the affected areas. Pray with them that many will come to know the One who can bring peace and comfort—Jesus!

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