

In the movie *The Ten Commandments* there is a scene in which the actor portraying Moses is thigh-deep in a pit of mud, tramping straw into the mixture. That's how they made bricks in 1400BC - the straw and mud blocks were hardened by the heat from the sun. I knew we were going to see adobe homes in Mexico. I didn't expect to see a brick factory in Mexico. And if I had expected to see a factory, I wouldn't have expected it to look like the picture below.

Part of our mission trip experience was "desert day". One hot afternoon, carrying our bibles and journals, hats and sunscreen and *water bottles (!!!)*, we drove into the desert. We got out of the van and walked apart from each other to spend several hours in solitude and prayer. I rounded a cliff and much to my surprise found the scene pictured below. Hundreds of bricks were baking in the sunlight. I could hear the faint trickle of water from a small stream nearby. The cliff I had just passed was rather undercut where someone had scooped the dirt out to make the bricks. It was hard to believe I was looking at a 21st century scene. I almost expected Charlton Heston to come walking out of the brush.

Had I been at the construction site earlier in the week where our team was adding onto an adobe home, I would have seen Mexican men drive up in beat-up pick-up trucks and carefully unload the fragile new adobe bricks. I would have seen our team members cautiously and painstakingly handling and placing them. As ancient a process as adobe brick-making is, adobe remains an ideal building material for desert dwellings. The sun's rays penetrate slowly and the bricks gradually absorb heat during the day then release it during the chilly nights, heating the homes.



And so, sitting in the sparse shade of a scraggly tree next to a tiny stream in a desert in Mexico, I thought about bricks. I thought about how we - the mission team, the members of the parish that had sent us, the families and friends of the people at the mission house, and all God's children everywhere - are the bricks that make up today's church. And the good works that we do, such as going on or supporting mission trips and all other charitable works, are the mortar holding us together. The word "desert" comes from the ecclesiastical Latin - "an abandoned place". Isn't it interesting that even in an abandoned place there exist the raw materials with which you can build.

I ask everyone who reads this to pray for people who don't have enough water, for young people who are trying to live worthy lives, and for missionaries.

Part of a series. Bobbi's previous Mission Trip Impact reflections are on the website - www.stmaryoxfordohio.org