

The Drum Family

June / July 2015



The Camino - A Walk Talk Ministry

“Salvator ambulado. (It is solved by walking.)”, St. Augustine wrote. I’m not quite sure how much was ‘solved’ along The Camino de Santiago, but I wholeheartedly agree that life and difficult issues sure seem much better!

Last summer, Billy walked the 791km from St. Jean Pied de Port, France to Santiago de Compostela, Spain - the route commonly known as the Camino Frances on the sacred pilgrimage of the Camino de Santiago. For centuries, people have continued to make this pilgrimage, the third most traveled pilgrimage in the world, preceded only by Jerusalem and Mecca. Some walk for religious reasons, some for sport and adventure, some walk as a way to grieve a loss or work through issues in their lives. Billy decided to walk as a coaching and counseling ministry to those who need a listening ear and a caring walking companion along the way. And there was no shortage of people who wanted to talk out their troubled hearts and minds with a good listener!

So, we decided to do it again. This time, both of us walked. Billy made his second ministry-on-the-Camino passage, while I (Laurie) made my first. Our goal was to walk alongside others, listen to their stories, and provide a loving, risk-free environment for sharing burdens. And, if in some way we could be of help and comfort and help people move forward in their struggles, we welcomed the opportunity.

Walking alongside people on The Camino is so natural and so ‘normal’ that conversations come easy and flow effortlessly as the miles tick by. It’s very non-confrontational and it feels ‘safe’. In a traditional counseling session, counselor and client sit in an office seated face-to-face. That alone is tough for some people. It is hard to sit across from someone and open up and share struggles and the tough issues while they look you in the eye. It creates anxiety for many people. But “walking in parallel with natural visual distractions allows for easier engagement”, says Kate Hays, PhD and past president of the American Psychological Association. Known as [Walk Talk Therapy](#), people seem to feel much more relaxed in a natural setting and feel more at ease with opening up and sharing their feelings when walking side-by-side with the listener. The walls and barriers to conversation come tumbling down. Hays says, “Patients have verified that looking forward rather than directly at a therapist helps them open up.”

We certainly have found this to be true on The Camino. As fellow walkers on the pilgrimage, we have a natural common bond. We are on the same path, walking toward the same goal. We are on this trail together. That connection alone is sometimes all it takes to bring others in to a place where they feel free to share deeper stories.

We found this to be the case with the Irishman we call Little Billy. We left the town of Estella at 7am under a glorious blue sky and with a cool breeze keeping the morning fresh. Not too far down the trail, we were already shedding the sleeves and putting on sunscreen for what was turning into a scorching day. Billy (the Irishman we call Little Billy - he named himself that due to his height

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next to Billy Drum) caught up to us as we walked. On other days, Little Billy (a man in his 60s) has had a strenuous goal and a fast pace and has passed us up quickly each day. But today, something was different and he said that he had already hit the wall. It wasn't even 8:30am yet and he was slowing down and low in spirit. So he walked alongside us instead of his usual pace.

For the first time, we could actually hold a real conversation with him. Big Billy (my tall husband) asked the question that seems to stump many on this pilgrimage and cause deep thought... "Why are you walking The Camino?"

Little Billy began to slowly tell the story of his wife and her long battle with MS. So much love and compassion and pain began pouring from his heart as he recounted the story of their relationship. At times, he laughed and talked about their vacations together, about her love of writing, about her unquenchable desire to learn more and get her masters. He also told of her battles with losing her ability to walk, of her going blind, and of her loss of independence. He talked of the day she could no longer sleep in their bed, and how difficult and lonely that was for him. He talked about being a caregiver and about finally being told by doctors that he couldn't do it all...He needed help. He talked for many, many kilometers. In the end, it turns out that this week is the one year anniversary of her death. He walks in honor of her and as a way to mourn and grieve.

As his tears fell, I reached out to touch his shoulder and he turned and grabbed my arm and squeezed it tight. He looked me in the eyes and said "Thank you. Thank you, Laurie. I'm going

to be okay." And he kept walking alongside us.

These things usually go one of two ways. Either the openness and vulnerability becomes too heavy and the other person finds a way to separate themselves and self - protect, or the vulnerability brings them closer. In this case, Little Billy pulled in closer to us. He stayed with us all day. He walked at a slower pace and talked to us for 22 km. I hung back quite a bit and let the two Billy's talk all day.

At the end of the day, even though it had been a sweltering day on the trail with little to no shade or shelter, even though my muscles were aching and I was exhausted, I thought it was a most beautiful, most incredible, most holy and divine day.

Little Billy went his way and we went ours when we got to the next town. And it wasn't an hour later before he called our cell phone to see if we would come to the square to share a drink with him and wind down from the day. We went to the pilgrim mass and blessing together, and then we ate dinner together.

This day was just the beginning of a friendship that continued all through the Camino. We were there on Little Billy's final day when he finished the Camino and walked in to Santiago. We shared a celebratory dinner with him and listened to more stories of his beloved wife, and of the son they lost to Down's Syndrome as a toddler. He read to us from her poetry book that was published after she died. At the cathedral, he asked for a special Compostelo (the official pilgrim certificate given by the church at the end of the pilgrimage) in honor of Elise, his wife. Her name is now proudly displayed as a pilgrim.

Little Billy's story is just one of many that we listened to and cherished along the Camino de Santiago. To read more about this ministry, go to <http://www.drumsforchrist.org/france-to-compostela>

Listening With Our Wounds - from Henri Nouwen's *Bread for the Journey*

To enter into solidarity with a suffering person does not mean that we have to talk with that person about our own suffering. Speaking about our own pain is seldom helpful for someone who is in pain. A wounded healer is someone who can listen to a person in pain without having to speak about his or her own wounds. When we have lived through a painful depression, we can listen with great attentiveness and love to a depressed friend without mentioning our experience. Mostly it is better not to direct a suffering person's attention to ourselves. We have to trust that our own bandaged wounds will allow us to listen to others with our whole beings. That is healing.

- *Praises for a successful and fruitful time of ministry and reflection on The Camino! Praises for health issues that were miraculously non-issues (Laurie's calf / knee, lungs, and back). Praises for time to spend with others who needed a listening ear and a caring heart as they walked The Camino to process their own life stories, to grieve, to transition, and to find healing and strength for the days to come.*
- *Pray for Spain, especially as we deal with a crippling heat wave and drought. We hit 106 degrees this week! It is uncommonly hot for this early in our summer, and these odd heat waves began in May this year. As we walked through the northern part of the country, the vast number of wheat fields looked beautiful... but upon talking to locals and farmers, we found that none of it was going to make harvest this year. The heat had hit it too soon and burned up the grain before it fully formed. In the past week 10 wildfires have been spreading around the country, fueled by the extreme dry conditions and hot southerly winds. Most Spaniards do not have air conditioning in their homes and use box fans. Those who do have air, generally only have one or two rooms in their home that they can cool. Pray for the elderly, who suffer the most in these conditions.*
- *Pray for the ebb and flow of ministry in these summer months. With kids out of school and the extreme heat and no air, many ministry and church activities are cut back to a bare minimum or cancelled completely.*
- *Pray for us to find creative ways to continue with our relationships and meetings, with coaching and counseling, with teaching and work during these summer months. Pray for our funds and partners in the USA - summer is a time when we traditionally see donations drop by 50%.*
- *Pray for us and for a special missionary family whom we will host in our home this month for some coaching and counseling and rest and relaxation. Pray for fun times and life-giving conversations, for healing and for lots of laughter.*

In the Good Ol' Summertime 🎵

Back when Billy and I were teachers in the USA, summertime meant a time for a little rest and recoup, a time to recharge our batteries, a time to go see family in far off places or take a vacation. As a teacher, many are also gearing up for the next school year, starting to look for new lessons, new classroom management ideas, and new books for the students. As a mom, many spend lots of time trying to keep the peace, keep kids moving and entertained and NOT sitting in front of the TV, and keep all of the family cool in the Texas heat.

For our family, summertime back then meant moving our base of operations to the Texas Mexico border. We were mission workers to the colonias in Reynosa and Rio Bravo, Mexico. Our summers were spent in the Mexican desert heat, facilitating bible school in neighborhoods and helping in a relief effort that built shelters for families that had none.

Nowadays, summertime looks a lot different. Our summers look a lot slower, which is a little odd for us. In our part of Spain, it is HOT! Most homes do not have air conditioning. If they do, it is only in the living room - not in the rest of the house. Spain is always serious about siesta hours, but they are MEGA SERIOUS in the summer... absolutely nothing occurs between the hours of 2pm and 5 or 6pm because it is just too hot. Last week, we hit 106. That's hot, and with no air, it's a killer. So, life here gets VERY slow in the summer. As for activities, there just aren't many. Many businesses and organizations cut their hours in the summer. Some only work until 2pm. Some close down completely for the month of August. Most jobs, by law, require a one month vacation period. Unlike in the USA where vacation time is earned, vacation is mandatory by law and is usually a full month. So, in our area, due to the heat, many decide to take their month in August and completely close their businesses, giving all employees their mandatory one month then, as well. In July, people just try to survive the heat and hold on till August.

So, what does that mean to us? Well, yesterday in church, overall attendance was less than half. Our adult bible study class that we teach is down by a third. Our youth class is down from 15 kids to 5. In August, there will be no classes at all and no ministry activities - only Sunday service. My Thursday bible study group is down to 3 ladies. Our Thursday morning group is off for the summer due to travel and kids out of school. Basically, nothing is 'normal' and everything feels out of whack. It messes with my work-oriented mindset because I keep feeling like I'm not doing enough. But then I remember that when I was teaching in Texas, this is what life looked like, too, and that was okay. So why do I feel like this is NOT okay? The slower times are tough for me; it's tough to slow down my rhythm and focus on what I can do and what is happening, and not focus on what isn't happening. Things ARE happening...

We just finished hosting a pastor on sabbatical and his family for several days as they came to visit us. Next week, we will be hosting a missionary family who work in an area with high security issues (so I can't give names or locations) as they come to spend some time in rest and relaxation, as well as a time of coaching and counseling and debriefing with us. We will also be helping them with dental appointments and doctor appointments while they are here. Last night, we hosted a cookout and fellowship for other ministry workers who live in our area. So, part of our ministry in these summer months is not necessarily 'local ministry', but it is a ministry of caring for other ministry workers as they need rest and refreshment and a listening ear and a community of other workers who understand their needs. Billy continues to meet weekly with local pastors and workers as a coach and counselor. So, school is out and things feel a little slower, but there is definitely still a lot going on in the summer!



Billy with a few pastors and workers... men bond over barbecues and cookouts!



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"It is no use walking anywhere to preach unless our walking is our preaching." ~St. Francis of Assisi