



## Season 4 | Episode Two | Let Hope Begin Here

(Walking around, chickens)  
(Speaking in Spanish)

Lydia: Thank you for keeping us in your mind. Be blessed. Thank you for everything and for always coming back, together we can accomplish many marvelous things.

Taylor Peters, Host: 40 PEOPLE STAND IN A SEMI CIRCLE AROUND A WOMAN IN HER 30'S- THAT'S LYDIA AND A MAN NAMED OCTAVIANO... HALF THE PEOPLE SURROUNDING THEM ARE AMERICAN, THE OTHER HALF WERE BORN AND RAISED IN GUATEMALA.

Lydia: I am just going to translate here so they can hear- he's saying that we come from all these different places, some of us are students, some of us are from different churches and Scott brings in all these different people from different places and churches and coordinates to come help out.

Peters: THE SCOTT THEY'RE REFERRING TO IS SCOTT ROBERTSON. A GENTLEMAN IN HIS 60'S. HE'S AVERAGE HEIGHT, WHITE HAIR, WEARING TENNIS SHOES AND CARGO SHORTS. HE LISTENS INTENTLY, SMILING POLITELY AND NODDING ALTHOUGH HE HAS ABSORBED MESSAGES SIMILAR TO THIS ONE TOO MANY TIMES TO COUNT OVER THE LAST 15 YEARS. SCOTT IS THE CONNECTING THREAD... HE HAS BROUGHT THESE PEOPLE TOGETHER TO THIS RURAL GUATEMALAN COMMUNITY FOR THIS VERY WEEK...

Lydia: We're going to work together and enjoy each other. God will favor us by allowing us to do things for them but also allowing us to learn and experience new things together with these people.

(Speaking in Spanish)

Lydia: Those who understand that... like the disciples, they realized that the mission is to go, to go to where these people are and to be in their need.

(Speaking in Spanish)

Lydia: If you have any questions for Scott, he's 100% a Spanish speaker (laughter) he can give you all the details of how this mission started.

(Scott Robertson speaking Spanish)  
(Laughter)

Peters: AS THEY STAND TOGETHER IN THIS REMOTE COMMUNITY, UNDER THE HOT SUN, THIS ECLECTIC GROUP LISTENS AND LAUGHS TOGETHER. A COLLECTION OF TEXAS TECH STUDENTS, A PROFESSOR, A WRITER AND A FEW OTHERS. WHAT ARE THEY ALL DOING HERE AND WHAT DOES IT HAVE TO DO WITH THIS UNIVERSITY... WE'LL TELL YOU ON THIS EPISODE OF FEARLESS- LET HOPE BEGIN \*HERE.

(Music)

Peters: FOR SCOTT, BEING IN GUATEMALA AND SPENDING TIME WITH THIS COMMUNITY IS SECOND NATURE. HE'S BEEN COMING HERE FOR DECADES. FOR OTHERS IN THIS GROUP, IT'S A FIRST. LIKE HALEIGH... SHE'S A WRITER FOR TEXAS TECH ADVANCEMENT AND WORKS CLOSELY WITH OUR TEAM.

Haleigh Erramouspe: So, I had never been on a trip like this before... It was really incredible. And to kind of understand how we all got here... we have to go back to [1974]- when a young Scott Robertson, 20 years old at the time, a college student... studies abroad and he just absolutely falls in love with studying internationally serving internationally. And over time, he kept feeling this desire to go back and keep doing it. This passion is ultimately how the idea of Let Hope Begin Here Guatemala got started.

Peters: Can you tell us a little bit about what the Texas Tech connection is?

Erramouspe: So, Scott has been working with the university for about a decade... he's a two-time alum from Tech- got his master's and doctorate from here and when he created this foundation, he knew the expertise and resources we have here at Tech, but he has also had this passion and is extremely dedicated to opening student's eyes to how they can use the education they get here to help others – especially those who would never have access to this help otherwise.

Peters: And how are the Texas Tech students that are serving on this trip, how are they selected? How are the faculty on this trip... how did they find Scott?

Erramouspe: Really, it's Scott finding them. How he makes those decisions is based on what those communities in Guatemala need. Previously, there were structural needs, so he connected with professors in the Huckabee College of Architecture and those in the Whitacre College of Engineering. In those cases, he found the professors best suited to that need, then they chose graduate students who were most connected to the project needs and they came themselves to fit those projects. But Scott also knew that for this trip he would need some different than what he has done before. There were some strong dietary and nutritional needs so he reached out to professors in the College of Health & Human Sciences, which connected him with Dr. Wilna who specializes in community nutrition in low-income communities. So, just really a perfect match for what he needed.

(Airplane sounds)

Erramouspe: We landed in Guatemala City, then drove to Chiquimulilla, Guatemala, which is about 2 hours from Guatemala City. Then, we get to Chiquimulilla and take another 45-minute drive on a dirt road to this teeny tiny community called Guallevalles.

(Chickens)

There were some people in our Tech group, we had students like Jerrson and Ahmed and they felt really at home.

Jerrson Hernandez Sarmiento: Originally when I was a kid, I grew up in Honduras till I was seven, especially the place that my parents were from. I mean, it was still, honestly, it was more developed because we had electricity. (FADE OUT)

Erramouspe: Jerrson is a Nutritional Science and Dietetics Major... before he came to the US with his mom, he spent part of his childhood in Honduras... And the other is a young man by the name of Ahmed, is a doctoral student in Electrical Engineering and he's originally from Egypt.

Ahmed Bayoumi: So, my first impression was like, oh, man, this is a lot like Egypt. Wow, this is the same feeling I get every time I come out of the airport in Cairo.

Erramouspe: Ahmed tells this story of coming to campus as an undergraduate in 2018... he's a bright-eyed student showing up in Lubbock Texas. And, like a lot of other international students, he wants to learn and grow and take that educational experience back to his home country, back to Egypt to build the infrastructure, do his part to help make it a better place.

Bayoumi: I can imagine myself when I'm done with my Ph.D going back home and doing the same thing, maybe not the exact same thing, going up mountains because we don't have volcanoes, but I would give back somehow, and I will feel this rush of excitement. So, when we got to the village and I got to meet the people, I was like, yes, these just like the people back home, we're all the same, we all trying to get through all of this. We're trying to help each other. So, I was just filled with this. And then I had this conversation with Dr. Robertson later. Is the feeling that you, you are helping people and you're giving what has been given to you. I was part of this community. I was part of, you know, humanity as a whole. And it felt like it all fit together.

Erramouspe: Within the community, it was amazing how quickly we were able to connect. We were with them all day. And that's what Scott's whole vision for what he does through his foundation. He has always said- I want to go into these communities and learn from them- they should be the ones tell us what they need. They don't need us, Americans going in and saying 'this is what we think you should do...'

Peters: Once he starts having some of those conversations, he develops the structure of this trip. From what I understand, they're divided up into two different groups, is that right?

Erramouspe: Yeah, so we had a clinical group and a construction group- the construction group focused on building projects, manual labor and some things that you would think of like that. Providing infrastructure to these communities.

\*NATS\* (video from Haleigh's phone)

This group is 20 miles from the nearest big city- and transportation is unreliable to say the least, this area is extremely remote. In fact, the only way to get to this village is by crossing this bridge.

\*NATS\* (from Haleigh's phone)

That bridge is old... it was incredibly dangerous – during the rainy season, it was expected that 5 to 10 people would die trying to cross this bridge going to town to get food or medical supplies. So, repairing that bridge was one of the big projects. But there was a lot of work to be done in this community.

\*NATS\*

Scott: We are creating water systems to clean up the tanks.

(Speaking in Spanish)

Scott: We will be teaching home gardening.

(Speaking in Spanish)

Scott: We will have a clinic.

(Speaking in Spanish)

Scott: We will also have classes on emergency first aid.

(Speaking Spanish)

Erramouspe: That was just one of the projects they had. One of the other ones was figuring out how to run electricity and internet to this particular community in Guayvalles... What would it look like to try and get solar panels out to these desolate areas? And that was what Ahmed was doing, he worked a lot with Christian, a gentleman originally from Guatemala, now living in Houston who comes back with us and is a huge asset... They were trying to figure out the logistics of how they can actually make this work.

Bayoumi: I wanted to know after it's set up, God Willing, how will they pay for the subscription? How will they pay for the electricity? Do we need to fund that as well, do we need to find another stream of income?...

Erramouspe: They're hoping that these computers in the schools will obviously provide a better education for the students. But that, like everything else, is a bit of an uphill battle. Culturally, school is not the system we know here in the states. The children's education is inconsistent... it's unreliable and for these families, it's expensive.

Erramouspe: So, the kids will be educated in their communities required by the government to have a teacher until 6<sup>th</sup> grade. After 6<sup>th</sup> grade, if they want a continued education, they have to pay \$500 a semester. I mean, these are communities living on \$1 a day or less. But even if you do have the money- it still doesn't even answer maybe the hardest question of how they'll get to the nearest town with a school which is 20 miles away.

(Music Close)

Peters: WE'LL BE RIGHT BACK.

(Promo music Open)

Thomas Boyd: Hi, I'm Thomas Boyd, I edit Fearless, you hear my voice from time to time on here... But the other part of my job with Marketing & Communications is to help tell visual stories... Last year, I created a video featuring the story of a young woman named Lindsay Dube, who participated in an experiential learning class called Adventure Media- we also shared it here in season three.

She took on this physically demanding challenge while living with muscular dystrophy... And this story in a lot of ways embodies grit and toughness that we feel represents the Texas Tech spirit. To watch Lindsay's story, and many more like it, subscribe to our YouTube channel... Just search Texas Tech University.

(Music)

Peters: These computers from what I understand, would be dual purpose, right? So, you talked about the educational advantages for the kids in the area but what else are they trying to use them for in these communities.

Erramouspe: They're also hoping to be able to use them as a resource for telehealth- many of these people don't have the ability to go see a doctor if they need to. So that's another important need Scott's group is trying to meet by getting technology in some of these areas. That is a clear need there based on what we saw in the clinical group.

Peters: And it's life changing what Scott and his group have the opportunity to do for the people in that community.

Erramouspe: Absolutely.

Peters: You talked about how there are two halves to this, you talked about the construction group. What about the clinical group, what are they doing?

Erramouspe: We set up and had medical professionals with us who saw patients. When we would go into these communities the line is literally out the door, down the road, you can just see that the people want this kind of help. The other side of health besides the doctor is taking care of yourself and feeding yourself. That's where Dr. Wilna and her students came in and did a lot of nutrition and wellness work, particularly with the women in the community.

(Speaking Spanish)

Erramouspe: One person I really got to see thrive in these conversations was Savannah. Savannah is from El Paso. She finished her undergraduate degree in May. She is one of Dr. Wilna's students. Savannah grew up in a dual language home and was completely fluent. This particular woman was talking with Savannah and her professor... she was talking about what food they have access to. What they would like to add if they could.

(Speaking in Spanish)

Savannah Hunnicutt: What have they said so far? ... I guess it's just trying to find ways of adding nutrition to what they're already eating. Their portions are small, depending on the person they eat like 3-5 times. But I'm assuming because the portions are so small... eggs when they can have eggs. Coffee and tortillas in the morning.

Wilna: Do they add sugar to their coffee?

(Speaking in Spanish)

Hunnicut: Like in the middle...

Erramouspe: They're going to create a garden, one of the primary things is that they don't have access to a lot of fresh fruits and vegetables. Which, as we know, is a core component to a healthy diet. They were using that information to gather and see what would be palatable. On the other hand, they're going to be creating these educational materials for these communities, all in Spanish. There will be picture graphics because, going back to education, not all of them are fully literate. The goal with both of these projects is to teach them about the importance of quality nutrition but beyond that it's giving access to what is going to make a difference. And this is Wilna's life's work... she talks about it in really plain terms. It's a partnership between Scott and Wilna and Texas Tech... if these students were anywhere but Texas Tech, they wouldn't be with this group on this trip... getting *this* experience.

Oldewage: Growing up in poverty, you become food insecure because you cannot access food. The result of that is being malnourished. If you are malnourished, you cannot cognitively develop as well as you can. What happens when you grow up? You're in a low-income job because you did not have all the opportunities again, and this whole poverty cycle just repeats itself. So, my mission is to break the poverty cycle through the projects that I'm doing.

(Music)

Peters: Scott has this expression that he uses a lot...

Erramouspe: Yes, it's his number one "Scott-ism" you often will hear him talk about how in life sometimes completely unconnected events will come together in really seamless ways...

Bayoumi: He kept using his, his catchphrase...

Savannah: He calls them moments. I don't remember what he exactly calls them.

Ahmed: One in a million chances...

Erramouspe: What are the chances.

Multiple voices: What are the chances!

Erramouspe: He calls them 'what are the chances' moments... and from the very beginning of his journey to create his foundation Let Hope Begin Here Guatemala, he just kept experiencing these moments where he felt like everything aligned in a way that he didn't understand and couldn't have predicted...

(Music)

Erramouspe: ...but that same phrase forces you to kind of look at all the opportunities around you and in front of you. So many of these students had these breakthrough moments on the trip... where they saw their academic goals and dreams start to evolve or shift in real time.

Bayoumi: I was thinking, well, I would love to have my dissertation be about this somehow. And I was talking to Dr. Scott about that. I was like, how can I shift and have all what I'm investing in the next few years? Because I'm doing my PhD in machine learning, I would love to service people eventually, not just create a paper and move on, you know, just write a paper, move on.

Erramouspe: That just aligns perfect with what Scott is trying to do on this trip, not just for the people of Guatemala but for the students who came with him! He doesn't want it to just be good for 1 year, 2 years, 5 years... he wants to make sure he has created something sustainable that the next generation can take on and improve over the next 20 years. This desire feels inherently "Texas Tech," to improve the lives of others in a way that lasts. And what is amazing, but not necessarily surprising is Ahmed isn't the only one from the trip who came back with this conclusion.

(Music)

Peters: INHERENTLY TEXAS TECH... MEANING PERMANENT, ESSENTIAL, CHARACTERISTIC. SOME OF THESE STUDENTS WERE CHANGED ON THIS TRIP. AHMED CHANGED HIS THESIS TO INVESTIGATE BRINGING TECHNOLOGY TO UNDERDEVELOPED PARTS OF THE WORLD... WHEN THEY GOT HOME, SARAH AND SAVANNAH IMMEDIATELY COMMITTED TO GOING BACK TO THIS SAME COMMUNITY FOR THE NEXT 5 YEARS TO CONTINUE DOING SCOTT'S WORK. THEY WANT TO COMPLETE SOME OF THE PROJECTS HE WORKED FOR YEARS TO START. IT'S FUNNY TO THINK ABOUT ALL THAT CAN HAPPEN WHEN YOU DECIDE THAT TAKING A CHANCE IS WORTH IT. THAT MAYBE TAKING A STEP OUTSIDE YOUR COMFORT ZONE WILL LEAD TO THE RIGHT CONVERSATION, THE RIGHT INTRODUCTION AND A LIFETIME OF THOSE MOMENTS WHERE YOU ASK YOURSELF WHAT ARE THE CHANCES...

(Music)

Peters: FEARLESS IS PRODUCED BY TEXAS TECH MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS. IT'S HOSTED AND WRITTEN BY ME, TAYLOR PETERS WITH SPECIAL HELP THIS EPISODE FROM HALEIGH ERRAMOUSPE. IT'S CO-PRODUCED BY ALLISON HIRTH AND THOMAS BOYD IS OUR AUDIO ENGINEER- HE DOES SOUND DESIGN AND EDITS THIS PODCAST.

Peters: IF YOU'D LIKE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE CHARACTERS WE TALKED ABOUT IN TODAY'S EPISODE, GO TO TTU.EDU/FEARLESS AND DON'T FORGET TO FOLLOW TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY ON SOCIAL MEDIA.

Peters: FEARLESS IS A TEXAS TECH PRODUCTION. FROM HERE, IT'S POSSIBLE.