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Caring for the Orphans & Widows

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GREAT IMPACT - A NURSE FROM CANADA

Blessing the Children in Debre Zeit, Ethiopia, has been so blessed to receive missionaries from all over the world: Europe, Australia, Mexico, South America. Most recently, we were blessed to have Helene Leis visit us all the way from Canada.

Helene came to serve Blessing the Children by performing health exams for the newest and sickest of our children. She came prepared to perform a full health exam on the children. She then was able to make recommendations to our staff to let us know who needed to see the doctor and what the possible issues are.

Helene served with BCI for two weeks. During those two weeks she examined more than 30 children, but not just a quick exam either. She spent around 1 hour with each child asking many questions of the mother or guardian to get a full health picture of the child. She then made many notes on the child's file so BCI can follow up with local doctors.

During those two weeks Helene also held a first aid training and a nutrition class for moms in the BCI

program. In the nutrition class, Helene taught the women proper nutrition for their little ones. She also answered any questions that the mothers had about their babies' health.

She also held a first aid training class for the BCI social workers and teachers. This was a great opportunity to teach proper responses to accidents and illnesses that arise with having lots of little people running around!

Helene is very much a go-getter. She is the type of person that can get things done. We have one child in the program, Nati, who has been sick for quite some time with a serious heart condition. We have been trying to get him to the right doctor who can perform Nati's surgery or send him overseas to have it done. Helene was able to set up an appointment for Nati with a highly specialized doctor in Addis Ababa who frequently sends children to India for surgery. We found out more about Nati's condition but we are also praying that this doctor is able to help Nati.

Even though it is a joy and a blessing when God sends us to serve Him in different places, it can also be overwhelming at times. Helene was overwhelmed by the poverty that she witnessed in Debre Zeit. Also, some of the mothers of the children expected Helene to heal their children and this caused Helene a lot of heart ache when she was unable to. Missions trips can be filled with ups and downs but God meets us in those low times and shows us that we are making a difference in the lives that we touch. God doesn't expect us to go and change a nation but He calls us to obedience. When we follow Him, He will use us in unmeasurable ways.

We are so thankful that Helene left the comforts of home to serve our children!



Helene during a nutrition class.



KEITH V. STRAWN
FOUNDER & PRESIDENT

Dear friends,

Please join us in this edition of the Post for an exciting new development that will enable us to send 142,560 meals to Ethiopia! On the cover you'll find an article about the impact that a nurse from Canada is having on our children and families.

Inside you will also find a mission trip experience from a past team member and this edition's highlights feature pictures of the The BCI Academy's new basketball court!

Thank you for your support and continued prayers. Because of you, we are touching lives in Ethiopia.

Abundant blessings,

A BLESSING TO BEREKET

A MISSION TRIP EXPERIENCE BY SUSAN S.

I was sitting on the sun-warmed rocks outside the Zion church waiting for the evening service to begin when a small posse of unkempt children came straggling into the courtyard. They paused in front of me and I surveyed their little dirty faces. One tiny girl caught my attention.

The expressionless set of her face was in direct contrast to the brightly colored dress she wore. Her deep chocolate eyes were blank and emotionless. I picked her up and held her. I kissed her tiny head multiple times and began to trace her features with my finger while she remained closely snuggled to my heart. After awhile she fell into a peaceful sleep.

When the time came for the service to begin I carried her with me to the church. A lady stopped me and asked "Do you know her story?" I told her no and so she began to describe to me the living conditions of this tiny girl-child.

Her mother was a prostitute and a brothel was her home - she slept in a bed stained with filth and adultery. "Cockroach" was the name this precious child inherited after her real name was forgotten. This is the girl that the BCI Missionary Coordinator had planned for me to visit the following week after discovering my passion for enslaved women. But the girl-child found me first. She was given a new name Bereket and the meaning is "Blessing".

A few days passed until I saw her again. On our way to a morning service we walked down the red-rock street where I saw her, picked her up and intentionally took her with me. Again within moments of being cradled close she fell into a deep sleep. After she awoke I noticed that she rarely made eye-contact with me and I had yet to see her smile, but she remained silent and still. While holding my BCI name tag, she studied my photo over and over again. Bereket stole my heart.

A few days later while out on a day of home visits, we were walking to our last visit when we came to the bottom of the Red Light District street. I excitedly asked the social worker "Are we going to see Bereket?!" She told me yes.

I scrambled to arrange my emotions in those next few minutes of approaching the brothel but I don't believe anything could truly prepare one to appropriately process the conditions of these broken lives. We ducked past a

stained sheer curtain into the tiny bar area where another thin curtain partially concealed an unmade bed and a wooden door stood ajar, leading into a darkened back room.

We greeted Emebeat (Bereket's mother) then sat down on the small wooden bench. A few minutes later a man emerged from the murky back room, followed by a young woman wearing a bright red shirt. Clearly a transaction had just been made.

Bereket and a few of her small friends gathered around while four of the working girls lined a bench across from us. As I surveyed the scene before me and rocked Bereket in my arms, the tears began to fall unbidden down my cheeks.

My heart bled for the children that innocently believed this was the way life was meant to be lived. And I cried for the sweet girls in front of me who were simply attempting to collect a few birr but somehow remained hopeless and stagnant in a place of disease and dirt.

We took out a bright colored shirt, a small doll, socks and tiny boots and gifted them

to Bereket. Again, she quickly fell asleep in my arms.

As much as I wanted to share my heart of love for the women, I couldn't speak through the sobs constricted in my throat...

Please join us in next months edition of the BCI Post to hear the conclusion of Susan's story and find out how she and her husband were able to be A Blessing to Bereket.



Susan and Bereket



The bar and brothel lined street of Debre Zeyit's Red Light District.

PRAISE REPORT: MONTHLY GRAIN SUPPORT

Once a month the Blessing the Children office in Debre Zeyit, Ethiopia is packed with parents and guardians eagerly awaiting their grain support. Thanks to the donors who sponsor a child each month, Blessing the Children is able to give much needed food and household items to each family in the program.

Each month the type and amount of grain support given out varies depending on the local prices and what was given recently. This past month the families received teff (local grain to make injera, the local bread that most Ethiopians eat at every meal), oil, soap, school exercise books, and pens. They receive the above items for every child of theirs that is enrolled in the BCI program. For example, if a parent has two children in the program then she receives all of the items two times over.

Some months the families receive other items, such as: pasta, rice, local spices. Teff takes up the bulk of the resources so on



Bags of pasta.

that month the families may not receive as many items but they are still receiving the same dollar amount of items. Even though they receive less of other items, most families enjoy the months that teff is given since teff is a huge part of the local diet and it is greatly desired by the families.

The parents and guardians arrive at the office much earlier than requested because they want to be first in line. It is a day of excitement for the families, especially this past month. Because a new school term was starting, the children were very excited to be receiving new school exercise books and pens.

It is only because of you and your monthly sponsorship support that we are able to help these families in this way. We thank you so much for your continued support and care for these precious Ethiopian children!

For additional pictures, we invite you to visit BCI's wordpress blog. <http://blessingthechildren.wordpress.com/>

142,560 Nutritious Meals

Blessing the Children has been given the amazing opportunity to partner with Kids Against Hunger to ship and distribute a 20' container packed with 142,560 meals to Ethiopia.

These meals will be a lifesaving blessing to the children and families in the BCI program, as well as to many families in the Debre Zeyit community and surrounding villages.

The specially formulated Kids Against Hunger meals contain fortified soy protein, dehydrated vegetables, rice, and vitamins and minerals. Although the meals are chicken-flavored, they are actually vegan and have a shelf life of up to 3 years. The container has been fully packaged by the KAH satellite in Monmouth, IL and is ready to go!

Now we **need your help**. In order to get this container to Ethiopia, we are in need of \$7,400 for shipping costs. Would you consider making a donation to help bless the children and families of Debre Zeyit? Do you know someone you could share this need with?

To make a donation, please contact Melissa at Melissa@BlessingtheChildren.org



Three of ten pallets containing the Kids Against Hunger meals.

HIGHLIGHTS

THE BCI ACADEMY IS GETTING A BASKETBALL COURT!

With soccer being the most popular sport in Ethiopia, we are excited to introduce the children to something new: basketball!

