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Caring for the Orphans & Widows

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THEN & NOW: TINSAE TEKLU

When thinking of your own life, do you sometimes like to look back to see where you were compared to where you are now? Well, at Blessing the Children (BCI) we love to do that with our program children. It is a great way to see the impact that the sponsorship program has had on a child's life.

Cute doesn't even begin to describe Tinsae at age 2 when he was first added to the BCI program. Five years ago, Blessing the Children met Tinsae and looked into his big, beautiful eyes and fell in love. Now those big, beautiful eyes look back at all that has happened to him in the past 5 years and he is so happy, grateful, and loves BCI for caring for him.

When Tinsae was 2 months old his mother dropped him off with her mother and step-father. She left and hasn't been heard from since. It is assumed that both of Tinsae's parents are deceased. He has an older sister that is in her late 20's but she is mentally impaired so she is unable to care for Tinsae.

For the next 4 1/2 years Tinsae lived with his grandmother and her husband. They cared for him as best they could but they were both very elderly and very sick. Also, there were four other children living in the house so providing for the children was hard on only their retirement income. Tinsae very often went to bed hungry.

When we first met Tinsae three years ago, he was very rambunctious, stubborn, and a troublemaker. He hadn't been taught how to behave properly and he was always getting into trouble. We remember thinking that Tinsae was so cute with his big eyes that set him apart from other kids but he was such a trouble maker.

But due to changes in his home life, Tinsae is a completely

different child. He is well-behaved and polite and considerate. About 1 1/2 years ago, Tinsae's grandmother passed away and his step-grandfather left Ethiopia to go live with his children. Tinsae's aunt and uncle stepped up and not only took Tinsae in but they also took in the other four children that lived with the grandparents and another extended relative.

A lot of times in Ethiopia, when children are taken in by extended family members they are treated as the house servant. They are typically required to get up early and work until late in the evening preparing meals, cleaning, taking

care of babies, and washing clothes. Fortunately, Tinsae does not have this fate. His aunt and uncle treat him as their own child. When you walk into the house there are family pictures everywhere and they all include Tinsae in them.

Tinsae says that he loves being a part of the BCI program because he loves going to school at BCI Academy. He has heard

about government schools and he feels happy that he gets to go to a better school. Tinsae is an eager learner. He always wants to answer the teacher's questions and he is eager to learn new material.

Tinsae is a happy, well behaved, well nourished, thriving child. Due to the help from BCI (breakfast feeding program and monthly food distribution) Tinsae is doing great physically. He also has free healthcare from the BCI program so he is rarely sick and he gets a vitamin every day at school.

It is encouraging to see how much of an impact BCI has had on Tinsae's life. BCI is happy to be a part of Tinsae's life and to see him grow into a strong young man. We eagerly look forward to seeing what God has in store for Tinsae.



KEITH V. STRAWN
FOUNDER & PRESIDENT

Dear friends,

Please join us in this edition of the Post for a praise report on clean water tablets! On the cover you'll find a "Then & Now" article about one of Blessing the Children's program children, Tinsa Teklu.

Inside you will also find the second part of Susan's article about her life changing mission trip experience and this edition's highlights feature pictures from the BCI Feeding Program!

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

Abundant blessings,



Tinsae upon entrance to the BCI Program in 2008



Tinsae at the BCI Academy in 2012

A BLESSING TO BEREKET CON'T FROM LAST MONTHS POST...

A MISSION TRIP EXPERIENCE BY SUSAN S.

"...so my husband Randy began pouring words of life and hope into the women (thru Nigist our translator). He spoke of God's love and care for them. He spoke of how God sees us as equals and how precious they are to Him. After abit more chatting, Nigist informed us that Emebeat had called her that day saying she wanted to get out, she wanted to change and she wanted a different job. Nigist told her she had to wait because the prostitution ministry/housing was not yet in place and the logistics needed to be worked out. We prayed with Emebeat, Bereket and the other girls then stepped out of that dark place. I broke down entirely, and as my husband and I walked arm in arm up that sad sad street, I ached to make a difference. A REAL difference. Later that night when asked by Jonnett about the visit, the tears flowed again and I said "I don't care what it takes, I want to get them out." Jonnett said we could start looking for rooms to rent and there was a slim possibility that in our remaining time there might be a chance of finding a place. With that knowledge I was able to rest and let go of a bit of the awful ache that clung to my soul. The next day dawned bright and crisp in true Ethiopian



style, and our day progressed like usual. It wasn't until afternoon that Nigist contacted Emebeat to notify her that she should begin looking for a room to rent. I felt restless and truly American in my impatience to have things happen quickly, but all I could do was collect a few items from the donation pile and fill my polka-dot suitcase in hopes of helping to place these things in her new home. Only a mere 2 hours after notifying Emebeat, we arrived at our second home visit of the afternoon and there she was, waiting for us with a shining smile.

Almost immediately after we arrived she excitedly informed us that she had already found an available place. We decided to go with her to look at the room, so we crawled into the Bajaj and wound back to a small secluded area. The compound was

surrounded by a tall green hedge with pink blooming flowers, just through the gate was a small, tidy courtyard shaded by a large sprawling tree . We were escorted to a mud room with a brilliant blue window.

The interior was decently spacious and smelled as though it had been freshly cleaned. In comparison to the brothel, it seemed to be a heavenly haven and the price was unrealistically fair. We agreed to pay half of the months rent that evening and then finalize details the following day. Meanwhile we had a chat with Emebeat alone in the Bajaj. "What is your plan for your life?" we asked. She expressed her desire to continue to learn how to read and write, to develop more personal skills along with her plans to search for a job, like selling potatoes or charcoal. She ended with "I have made the decision to leave and I will never go back. I simply want to follow Jesus."

With heartfelt excitement we informed her that we would like to support her for a little while until she can be self-sustained but ultimately we want her to have a bit of freedom to care for her daughter. Parting ways for the evening we agreed to contact her the next day with moving details. Sleep was chased away by my thoughts as I laid in bed that night. I imagined the excitement Emebeat must be feeling. How would it be to know you only have one more night in a place of dark degradation and pain? Only one more night in a bed wrought with semen and diseases? Only one more night on that dark, depressing street? One more night..."

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.



PRAISE REPORT: CLEAN WATER BY MARIANNE FROM HOLLAND

When you run out of eggs – or any grocery product – what do you do? What about when you're out of toilet paper, shampoo, toothpaste or dish soap? My common course of action is to run out to the supermarket and buy more. It rarely happens that something I need cannot be found on the shelves of my local store. Actually, not only can I find what I'm looking for but there is generally a very diverse selection of each product available, sometimes to the point of finding it hard to choose.

The same goes for medical care. If I'm sick, I go see a doctor. If I have dirty clothes, I throw them in the washer and that is the extent of the effort it takes to clean my clothes. If I want to turn on a light or charge my laptop, there is power available. And whenever I want to shower, there is water.

I believe that those of us who grew up in first world countries, take a lot of things for granted. I grew up in a country (the Netherlands) where we have lots of water and where the water that comes from the tap, has been defined as the best drinking water in the world. Since I have been in Ethiopia for the last six months I have learned to appreciate the 'little' things more and have become acutely aware of what a blessing it is to have the kind of access to water that I do in my country.

We all know that water is needed for a lot of things but Ethiopia is not a country with a wealth of water. After I experienced a couple of days without water, I started to appreciate it more and realize that a lot of things are not possible without water. Things I normally take for granted. Without water there is no shower, no flushing the toilet, no laundry washing, no cleaning, no dishes, but most important: there will be no water to drink. Our body can only go a couple of days without water before it shuts down.

When there is no running water in Ethiopia, I am very blessed to be able to go up to the store to buy bottled water but this is not the case for most Ethiopians who can barely afford to purchase food.

According to a recent report of the world health organization, only 13% of the Ethiopian rural population has access to clean drinking water. The rest of the population is exposed to diseases that are connected to a lack of water, dirty water, bad hygiene or lack of sanitation. Dirty water is the number one killer in the world with a rate of 25,000 victims a day.

Women and children have to walk – sometimes 7 hours a day – to find a place where they can take water. And even then, that water is dirty and disease ridden. They fill up their cans and carry them all the way back home. All that effort, for water. In my country, the average use of water is 130 liter per person a day, whereas the average use of water in Ethiopia is 3 or 4 liters per person a day.



Even if the majority of Ethiopians had access to a tap for running water, the tap water in Ethiopia is not safe to drink. I have seen firsthand a lot of Ethiopians that are often sick, because of the bad drinking water.

Knowing this is a huge problem, Blessing the Children is working to provide aqua tablets for the BCI families. These tablets are dropped into any available water and effectively clean the water, thus giving the families

access to healthy, disease free drinking water. These little tablets have prevented a lot of visits to the clinic and have improved the life standard for many of the children in the BCI Program. They have made a big difference for the families and we feel so blessed to be able to provide them.

HIGHLIGHTS

THE BCI FEEDING PROGRAM!

The feeding program continues to be a huge blessing to the children and a great experience for the teams who are able to visit the ministry in Ethiopia and volunteer their time to help out.

