



"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11

Hello. This is Deanne Gillock, and I wanted to write an update to my friends and family about my recent mission trip. This past summer I had the opportunity to go to Ethiopia on a mission trip with Blessing the Children International. What made it especially memorable was sharing these life-long experiences with my 15-year-old daughter, Chloe.

Like most people, I have seen TV clips, watched movies, and read articles about third world countries. What I longed for and felt called to do was experience it firsthand...to see the faces, take in the smells, and embrace a hurting child. I wanted to see God in the midst of it all and not read about someone else's experience. I wanted the experience to change me.

Our team of volunteers consisted of about 20 people, mostly college-age women. Our guesthouses were quite modest, yet compared to most Ethiopians, we lived in luxury.

Our days consisted of teaching English classes, leading children's Bible studies, repairing homes, distributing food & clothing, and spending one-on-one time with children.

During the two weeks, we met hundreds of children, many orphaned from AIDS. Most were living with a single mom, aunt, cousin, or older sibling. Homes consisted of one-room mud shacks, dirt floors, with straw or tin roofs. They all shared one thing: extreme poverty.

On our first day in Debre Zeit, I volunteered to go on a home repair visit. The house belonged to Worka, a widow, with three small children (top picture). To make a living, she baked 60 loaves of bread a day.

Worka needed two repairs. First, her front door was broken, allowing thieves to break in. Second, her roof was badly rusted so when it rained, all their belongings were ruined.



As we arrived at the house, neighbors came running from every direction, treating us like celebrities. We were the “foreigners” from America, here to fix Worka’s house. Little did they know, we were just clueless women with no experiences fixing doors and roofs. However, the home repair venture would ultimately be a side-project within a much bigger plan.

We assessed the situation, determined what supplies we needed to purchase, and would be back the next day. Before leaving, I asked Worka if I could buy a loaf of bread. Even though she wanted no money for the bread, I decided to give her some extra cash. I secretly slipped the money into her hand as I hugged her goodbye.

As our taxi pulled away, our translator asked me if I saw Worka crying. I did not.

The translator went on to explain that each day Worka would buy grain on credit, bake the bread, and then repay her loan after selling the bread. However, on the previous day, she could not repay her loan. This meant she would not be able to get any more grain until she paid off her loan. That night she could not sleep and was praying desperately for God to help her.

Here is the supernatural part: the money I just gave her was God’s provision for her loan!

Wow. God brought me half way around the world to answer the prayers of a woman I had



never met. I was completely out of my comfort zone and I even questioned my own sanity for going on the trip. But it was clear to me now that the burden God put on my heart months earlier to “go” and serve in Ethiopia, was part of a bigger plan. God would show His love and faithfulness by answering her prayers in a completely unexpected way, using a completely unsuspecting stranger.

Over the next few days, I was able to spend time with Worka and her children. We bought supplies, hired a local guy to help with the repairs, and she resumed her bread-baking business. Each time I looked in her eyes, I saw a glimmer of hope, a reminder of God’s never-ending love and faithfulness to His children.

I feel so grateful for my front-row seat and being able to witness God orchestrate all kinds of supernatural encounters. Signing up to “go” to Ethiopia was not about me. It was about seeing a loving God do amazing things beyond my wildest expectations. I cannot wait to go again! *Won’t you consider going too?*