

Memories of Two of My Mission Trips

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South Africa (February 2010)

I saw Jesus in the school children of South Africa. We had opportunities to go to the schools to talk to the children. For three days, we were invited to speak to 10 different classes of Grade 4 and Grade 5 children at the primary school. As we told them Jesus' story of the Good Samaritan and they acted out the story, we saw the excitement in their eyes as they understood about being a Good Samaritan too. We saw the joy when we told them that we were seeing them showing compassion to their classmates.

One little girl had just lost her father at midnight and was there in school that day. Another little girl shared that her mother had been ill for many years with cancer. We were told about another little girl who had been reunited with her father and mother after living her whole life with her grandmother because her father had been in jail for murder. Many of the children had experienced AIDS in their families.

I went to South Africa barely able to speak because of a reaction to one of my recommended overseas shots, and one little boy asked me about my voice every day and then gave me yet another remedy for my hoarseness. The children crowded around us for hugs and for our autographs. We were from America and that made us special to them. Several asked if we would take them back to America with us.

Whenever we tried to take a picture of one of them dozens would crowd in the picture. They were so loving. I cannot count the hugs and the words of thanks that we received. We saw Jesus in the children's smiles and their kindness to us. We had come to them to be a blessing but it was they who blessed us.

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Moldova (September 2010)

Before leaving for Moldova, Rhoadesville Baptist Church and other churches collected money for food bags for the people of Moldova. We visited the families and gave them this nourishing food and supplies.

There was one family that I will always remember. Valea was the mother of three children ages 20, 18, and 11 at the time and expecting her fourth child in a month. She also was caring for her grandson who was 1 ½ as her daughter worked. Like many of the women, her husband had to work far away in Moscow for most of the year and could only return for a month or two to be with the family. This made life very hard for the women. Valea had not been able to work in those last months before her baby came. When we arrived with two food bags for the family, Valea told us, "I was using my last bit of oil yesterday and praying that God would provide for me and my family as he did for the widow and her son in Elijah's day."

She was remembering the story in I Kings when Elijah meets the widow of Zarephath and asks her to bake him a small loaf of bread. She tells Elijah that she has only a little oil and flour to bake one more loaf for herself and her son then they will starve to death. He tells her to bake a small loaf for him and then to bake a loaf for herself and her son. She did and the oil and flour would not run out until the Lord sent rain on the land and the famine was over. And it was as Elijah said. When the widow was faithful to do as the prophet said, God multiplied the oil and flour.

Valea said, "I was praying and then you came." My teammate Sara and I reached into the bags and we said, "Two bottles of oil. And flour, too." I think all of us were crying.