



"The Lord is righteous in all his ways and loving toward all he has made. The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth."
Psalm 145:17,18 (NIV)

Esther wanted to write this month's newsletter. Here is what she wants to share:

Some people ask why we do what we do. And to be perfectly honest, we ask ourselves this question quite often.

But this morning we were reminded why we do this and how blessed we are to have been given this wonderful privilege. Today is Sunday, so off we went to Agape to worship with the boys.

I would like to tell you about one of our boys that REALLY blessed me this morning. He came to Agape sometime in November. The first time I officially met him was when Dianne Warn brought him to me and asked me if I had anything against him. I put my arms around him and told him that I didn't have anything against him and that I loved him. Dianne informed me that Sam (which isn't his real name) hears voices and the voices have told him that I don't like him. Dianne and I put our arms around him and prayed for him and asked the Lord to show Himself to Sam and to please let Sam know how much we love him and how much He does.

December came and most of the boys went to their rural families, but 15 boys were kept at Agape because their homes weren't ready for them yet. Sam was one of those boys. I don't even know how to describe him to you except to say that Sam is like no other boy we have ever had at Agape. Our staff would shake their heads when you mentioned his name. He speaks English very well, things must be done his way, he is a loner, but his presence is very big. Everyone knows who he is. But no one knew what to do with him. Because once something is in his mind it CAN'T be changed.

While he was getting to know Agape, he met Ryan. Ryan is here for six months and has started a garden on the Agape compound to raise vegetables for our boys to eat. Sam started to work with Ryan. Soon,

Darla's Corner

God's mercies are new every morning. Great is His faithfulness!

We have seen God's faithfulness through the years, and this year will be no exception. I feel like doing a "happy dance" with each thought of the new missionary families coming to join our team. It is so exciting to see how God provides...and His timing is always perfect! He also shows His mercy and keeps us encouraged when things get tough. He allows us to witness His power to change young lives.

We have previously written about our Reintegration Team and how they go with the new boys to visit their rural homes and try to begin a reconciliation process. When the team went home with a boy we'll call Kefa, they happened to ask about a noticeably barren plot of land. "That land is cursed," the villagers insisted. "So there is no point in planting crops on it." Then the team learned the reason Kefa had been sent away was they also believed he had been cursed!

The people in this Luo village were followers of a religious cult called "Legio Maria" or "Legion of Maria," which is quite prevalent in Kenya. It was formed in the 1960s after a split with the Roman Catholic Church since the Africans wanted to have their own religion. The Legio Marias believe God was reincarnated in an African man's body. This man is referred to as the Black Messiah. God came back to earth specifically as a mediator for the Africans since the Europeans had failed by killing Jesus. Mary had also come to Kenya earlier and was by that time embodied in the form of an older African woman. This religion also deals with witchcraft and traditional Luo practices.

So there was Kefa with no sign of a curse; clean, polite, and well spoken. Our team leader, John Mwalo, patiently explained that we serve the Creator God who is more powerful than any curse. Then he asked if he could pray for the land. The villagers were so surprised to see the "miraculous" changes in Kefa that they allowed this prayer. A short time later, crops of sikuma wiki and corn were planted to see if the curse had been lifted.



God answered their prayers. The land is now growing with healthy crops and Kefa was reunited with his family! Our Reintegration Team has made several visits to see Kefa and to follow up on his progress. The villagers now welcome the team warmly and have even established a Saturday Christian Fellowship group as a result.

This is just one example of how our former street boys are becoming bridges back into their communities for the true

Gospel of Christ. Thank you for being part of this incredible team effort! And please pray that our Reintegration Team will continue to have protection, wisdom, and winsome words to reach people still living in confusion and fear.

Because He loves us, *Darla*



everywhere Ryan was, Sam was. If Ryan was on the roof, Sam was below him handing him anything he might need...from a hammer, to screws, water, moving the ladder, digging holes for the plants, watering the plants, etc. Sam is Ryan's shadow. Whenever we get on campus the first question out of his mouth is, "Where is Ryan?"

Well back to this morning. It was Sam's first time to be on the worship team. I was soooo surprised to see him up in front of everyone. I was thrilled. About three songs in I looked over at him and his hands were raised (the only one to raise his hands), his eyes were closed, and he was singing the song with all of his might. Let me tell you I saw a little bit of what heaven is going to be like. We will all worship with that much joy, excitement, and reverence.

That is why we do what we do. Thank you, Lord, for this reminder today.

I also have a P.S. to this story.

At the close of our Agape Sunday service we ask the new boys who were brought in this week to please come up front and introduce themselves so we can know their names. Three boys came up and introduced themselves. We all clapped to welcome them and they sat down. As I looked over at two of the boys, Sam had come and sat by them and had his arm on their shoulders. Our loner boy is now a welcomer (I know that isn't a word but it fits).

We don't tell too many stories about our boys because when we do, then we see a downward spiral in their lives. So please pray that my sharing of this story won't affect Sam's life. Please hold him up in prayer this month. Please pray for his growth both spiritually and emotionally. Ryan will be leaving this month so that will be very hard on Sam. Please hold him up in prayer. Thanks!

Now it's Blake's turn:

January was an amazing month. After years of waiting and anticipating, our new Dining Hall and Kitchen is nearly completed. Tyler's team of guys was fabulous. Tyler, Tom, Todd, Brooks, and John worked so hard. Rich and Glen came in from Oregon to help on the project as well. They were truly



a blessing to us and to all of the staff and boys. The building is not yet fully completed, but we have already moved two classes into it. We hope to do the final things when we return to Kenya, probably in May.

We will be leaving Kenya on the February 7, to attend a wedding in India. From there, we will be heading home, probably to southern California first and then on to Modesto.

We are really anxious to be with our family and to see as many of you as possible. This has been our longest time in Kenya and also our most rewarding. We feel a lot was accomplished while we were here. Praise the Lord. Thanks for your prayers and faithful financial support. They are what keep and sustain us. Thank you!

We love you,

Blake & Esther Gibbs

Praise Reports:

- "Sam's" growth in the Lord
- Our new Dining Hall and Kitchen (everyone marvels at it!)
- Protection and provision from the Lord while we've been here

Prayer Requests:

- Traveling mercies while we journey to India and home
- "Sam"
- The many new boys at Agape
- Don and Hughena Brennehan and Steve and Betty Bishop as they minister at The Farm
- Chris and Tammy Page and Eric and Lisa Kjeldgaard as they raise support to begin their ministry with Agape

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