



From Ship to Shore

The Chapmans' Newsletter from the Mission Field
December 2004

Infected by a condition they did not seek, rejected by those they know, avoided by people they do not know, condemned to a future they cannot bear. These were the people waiting in line outside the stadium the first morning of surgical screening. Max Lucado used these words to describe the lepers in Biblical times, but they are so appropriate for those who had come in the hope of receiving a surgery onboard the ship.



Patients Waiting in Line at Screening

From Kristin— As we drove up to the stadium before dawn, my mind reeled as my eyes took in the sheer number of people waiting for us to arrive. Thousands of people waited, some had been there for days, for a chance to see a surgeon and possibly receive a life-changing surgery. This was screening day for the Anastasis in Cotonou, Benin.

At first glance, I just saw a mass of people and felt the overwhelming need. There would be no way for all of these people to be seen, much less helped. As I began to move through the line my heart ached for these precious people with so many different needs. I saw people suffering with large facial tumors and Noma (a flesh eating disease). There were malnourished infants, burn victims, blind people, and people with club feet. As I walked among them, I thought about Jesus and the crowds he so often encountered. Constantly surrounded by people begging for help and calling out to him in need, he relied on the Holy Spirit to keep him calm and focused on his work. And, that is how I made it through the day, giving these people over to God and relying on discernment from the Him as to which ones would receive help and which ones would not.



Keith with Patient at Screening

Keith worked with the maxillofacial surgeons throughout the day, seeing patients with large facial tumors, cleft lip and palate, and Noma. I worked in a variety of capacities. I walked the line, which stretched over a mile in length, looking for some of the more severe cases to be brought to the front of the line. I handed out water to people waiting in line. And, hardest of all, I sat at the prayer station and prayed for the people we would not be able to help.

I am thankful for the opportunity to be part of the screening day, and for the constant reminders throughout the day of my need for dependence on Jesus to do his work. Screening is now over, and many of these people are now receiving their surgeries. My prayer is that not only will their physical needs be met as they come to the ship, but their hearts will be touched as they learn of the love and changing power of Jesus.

The needs in this country are more than just medical, and as we work in Benin, a maternity clinic will be built, wells will be dug, AIDS education will be taught, orphanages and prisons will be visited, the Jesus film will be shown, pastor's conferences will be held and teachers will be taught. That's where I come in! This outreach I have moved to a new department. I will be working in the outreach department working with the Child Development Project. Our goal this year is to train teachers to use methods other than rote memorization, the method most commonly used in West Africa, to teach their students. One of the main objections to this method from the teachers in Africa is that they do not have the supplies and materials needed to teach more creatively. We are trying to overcome this objection by using only free local materials to teach our workshops. For instance cement bags and cardboard for posters, scraps of material and paper for art supplies, etc. Last week, we sent our translators out into the community to collect things they found lying in the streets. They came back with bags full of various items, and we used the materials to create an alpha-



Kristin and Translators Preparing Teacher Workshop Materials



Greeting by Ze Tribal Chief

bet to hang in one of the classrooms where we will be working. So far it has been lots of fun preparing for the workshops. We will begin in the schools on Dec. 8.

In addition to teaching in the schools in Cotonou, we will be teaching out in a remote village called Ze (pronounced Zay). Ze is about an hour and a half drive from Cotonou and reminds me of what I picture a traditional African village to be, complete with grass huts, naked children, and a tribal chief. We had the opportunity to visit the village two weeks ago, where we were welcomed by the chief and the elders in the community. There were formal introductions, some wonderful singing and dancing, and lots of smiles, since none of us from the ship speak Fon, the local language. We met with the directors of the schools in the area and will be going back to visit and begin our workshops during the first few weeks of December.

I love the traditional African villages and am looking forward to my time in Ze.

From Keith— “Your love reaches me; it’s what I need, it’s what I need...” These are lyrics to a song I commonly sing when leading worship here for our community meetings. As I was playing the song not long after the screening, I thought about how relatively easy it was for me to sing and believe these words, but how difficult it must be for someone like Jacob, whose appearance resembles what most children might refer to as a monster due to multiple tumors. These tumors, called neurofibromas, are difficult to remove and continue to grow. I wondered, if I were in Jacob’s shoes, could I sing this song with the same enthusiasm? It was this thought that reinforced what I believe is the largest part of our job here. Even with our incredible surgeons, Jacob’s appearance will be improved, but he will never be cured of his ailment. So what’s the point of taking him as a patient? The point is to somehow show people like Jacob that there is a God who loves him and has a purpose for him.

It has been a breath of fresh air and excitement to get back into our dental clinic off the ship and it was incredible to, for the first time, be a part of the set up. Our building is about a half-hour’s



Dental Clinic in Godomey

Dental arriving in So-Tchaoue

drive from the ship in a town called Godomey, and we have four dentists (myself and three short-term volunteers) and one hygienist working there. I have been amazed at the differences between Benin and Sierra Leone. Although ranked just 28 countries above Sierra Leone, the lowest in the UN’s Human Development Index, it is apparent that the people of Benin have far greater access to help than those in Sierra Leone. For this reason, the dental team decided to travel to a more remote community, So-Tchaoue, a “village on stilts” built on the edges of a lake. After traveling an hour by car and 30 minutes by boat to reach this remote village, I saw that the need for help was still great in Benin. We extracted

teeth on over a hundred people that day and scheduled over two hundred patients to come see us in Godomey. Everyone agreed it was worth every ounce of extra effort it took to reach out to these people.

From Taylor and Lauren— We are great! We both enjoy school and spending time in the sun trying to get our skin more like the Africans. I think we have a ways to go, but we’re getting there! —Last week Taylor wrote in her diary, “I love Africa. I really, really love Africa.” I think she speaks for our family when she says that. We are so happy to be back and we thank you for continuing to support us in this opportunity to serve the Lord in Africa!



Taylor and Lauren

In Him,

Keith & Kristin



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