



Tears of Sadness & Joy

by Gillian Stevenson

It is nothing short of amazing that we have been saved by the precious blood of Jesus – we can only be thankful and filled with wonder for His sacrifice, which we do not deserve. The line from the children's song, 'I am so glad that Jesus loves me...even me' is the theme I've focused on recently with the children in our children's homes in Kenya.

Hearing that Jesus loves 'even them' amazes and encourages them. I am glad God called me to be a small part in their journey with Him. We aim to give them a better start in life but more importantly, to provide a solid biblical foundation. As the Kindfund vision says, we pray for, '...children with hearts on fire for God'.

I am in Kenya with Kindfund, a charity based in Northern Ireland. We are a small group of people with a heart for sharing the gospel

with children in the north of Kenya. This dry, semi-desert, tribal, rural area is home to the pastoralist Turkana, Samburu and Rendille people – some of the poorest tribes in the country. We have three homes that care for 130 children. Our aim is to further the gospel of Jesus Christ and to show the love of God through helping to relieve poverty and rescue children from abandonment, FGM, abuse, child marriage, HIV and other illnesses. We started a feeding programme for 30 of the poorest children among the Sakuye, a small neglected, mainly Muslim, tribe near the Kenyan-Ethiopian border. 'If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?' (Jas 2:16).

In God's Big Family

Among these pastoralist peoples, there is a lot of religion mixed with superstition and traditional cultural practices. We answer this spiritual confusion with the gospel message as we provide for our children's physical, spiritual, educational and social development. We bring them up in a Christian home – a big family with God at the centre. On the surface this work may seem like it's mostly contained within the four walls of our children's homes but we are sowing the seed in young hearts and we pray that God will nurture that seed. When they grow up and leave the home they will take the message of the good news of Jesus and what He has done for them, teaching it to their children and friends, wherever they settle in Kenya or elsewhere in the world. Our management and live-in staff are all Christians and they

create an environment where the children sing about Jesus, take part in fellowship and pray. We provide primary education and fund the children through secondary and tertiary schools, as they are able. All this is a witness to the local community.

A Ripple Effect

We use Bible Education Services (BES) literature with our children and distribute it to some of the local village churches as a further gospel outreach.

In a Muslim village of 3,000 people, our small feeding programme demonstrates Christianity at work. Feeding the poor has created the opportunity for us to reach into a 200-child primary school with BES literature. We pray that people in the local villages will see what God is doing in the lives of the

We bring them up in a Christian home – a big family with God at the centre.



children who seemed to have no hope in this life but now, through the saving power of Jesus, are transformed



Ndikir home in the early days

children who seemed to have no hope in this life but now, through the saving power of Jesus, are transformed. He has given them a hope for the future both in this life and the next. 'Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it' (Prv. 22:6).

Lives Transformed

Two days are rarely the same in the children's home. There are ups and downs, elation and heartbreak, laughing and crying, good health and hospital visits, peace and tribal unrest and so much more. Yet all the time we are confident that God is with us in it all, whatever life throws at us. '...in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose' (Rom. 8:28). Our vision is to locate at-risk babies and provide a loving, God-centred, safe environment for them to grow up in.

Baby A – We are often involved in baby rescue due to some local cultural practices that result in crude abortion, poisoning or abandonment of a baby to die from

exposure immediately after birth. Baby A was born and left under a bush in the middle of the desert, alone, at the mercy of wild animals or exposure, whichever took its life first. Then God, in His mercy, intervened. A woman walking in this very remote area, heard a cry. She went to see and rescued the baby from danger. A miracle! Baby A was brought to our home. This precious wee soul is now being loved, cared for and taught in the ways of God. I cannot help but think about the plans God has for this little life. A life which God says is '...fearfully and wonderfully made...' (Ps 139:14). A life that was almost extinguished. It is incredible to be a part of a miracle initiated by God and involving many different people along the way. I'm glad to say we have been there to help other babies. It is heartbreaking to think of the many whose cries went unheard.

This precious wee soul is now being loved, cared for and taught in the ways of God.

Family B – Some of our children are orphans or have been abandoned or abused by extended family members and have suffered for many other very difficult reasons. Some mothers die in childbirth, leaving the baby and sometimes older siblings with no one to care for them. Family B lost their mother in childbirth on the floor of their traditional house in a small village far from the hospital. The children's father died a few weeks later from HIV, leaving the three siblings orphaned and homeless. We heard about the situation and were glad to be able to take them into our family. They are doing well, being loved and cared for, and know

that God loves them. The oldest is a brilliant worship leader, even at a young age. 'Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name; welcomes Me...' (Mk 9:37a).

Family C – Some children's mothers are not capable of looking after them due to mental health issues. Family C came into our care for this reason. First one child came to us, then their mother was abused and became pregnant. She was in no fit state to look after her child so both siblings came into our care. God has made a way where there seemed to be no way for these, His precious children.

Jesus Loves the Little Children

I have cried lots of tears many times. The stories of tragedy and heartbreak these children have already lived through in their short lives is sometimes almost too much to bear. There were tears of sadness when one of our babies died due to illness at just nine months old. It was a difficult time for our children and staff. Through it all, God was with us. At the burial, we had an uplifting time of worship to God in the scorching heat of the midday sun. The children, staff and our neighbours joined us in our sadness, all with one voice, singing to the Lord and thanking Him for this young life. Then there are tears of joy when we have the privilege to lead one of our children to the Lord – the biggest blessing of them all!

Jesus Loves Even Me

While we care for their physical needs, above all, we want to see children with hearts on fire for God. We pray for them to grow up with God at the centre of their lives, fulfilling their potential as they share His love with others. One of our older children, now a young adult, said after leaving our home, 'Remember that God is the one who sent you to do His work, so you must do it passionately!' What a challenge to us to keep going with God's help. It is encouraging that they are reflecting on their time with us and thankful for their upbringing in a Christian home. God is doing wonderful things. We are thankful for everyone who joins with us in prayer as we continue to serve and give glory to God for His work among these precious young people.

Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these' (Mt. 19:14).

1. 'Jesus Loves Even Me' by Philip P. Bliss, 1870 alt



Ngaremara Home



God has made a way where there seemed to be no way for these, His precious children.

Area around Ndikir Home