Signs for Hope

Fall 2010 Newsletter

Praise the Lord, our prayers have been answered! The new sponsorships for some of the children at the Deaf Mission in Liberia have provided enough funding for all the children to have two meals a day instead of just one. Thank you new sponsors! Also, all the children now have bunk beds with new mattresses, bedding, and mosquito nets. These were all provided by the funds our mission team left with ACFI (African Christian Fellowship International; the indigenous Christian church in Liberia caring for these children) this past June.

Sponsorships for the children continue to come in—twelve thus far. Join me in asking God to provide each child, all 51, with sponsors before I return to Liberia in May-June 2011. These sponsorships have taken on many faces: Deaf and hearing people are sponsoring children; families have begun to sponsor one child or two; single women have begun to sponsor a child, Sunday School classes are sponsoring a child. The cost to sponsor is only $40 a month. When you consider how quickly you and I might spend that much on a night out at a restaurant or on 8 cups of Starbucks coffee, or even on one item of clothing. WOW!!! That same $40 helps provide food, medical care, and teachers pay for these children for an entire month. Seems $40 in Liberia goes much farther than it does here. So think about it and pray about it, maybe God would have you sponsor one or more of His precious ones in Liberia. "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine you did for me."

I love the fall of the year in Western North Carolina! Those chilly morning temperatures in the upper-30's with the afternoons in the mid-70's are invigorating. The deep blue skies as the backdrop for the vast array of various shades of red, orange, yellow, and green leaves are incredible. When I see His awe-inspiring palate I want to shout/sign, "God, you are an awesome God", and sometimes I do. Our Creator God is truly AMAZING!

God continues to solidify strong foundational aspects for the establishment of *Signs for Hope*. His ways of doing this are certainly not the ways one might expect, but they are coming through my own personal life experiences and walk with Him. There is no doubt He is calling me to a much deeper level of obedience and accountability personally as He reveals His ways for "coordinating the adoption of orphans around the world."

My husband and I have experienced an emotional roller coaster the past eight months as God began answering a long term prayer of mine *to provide a buyer for our home*—even though it has never been for sale. The goal is to decrease our debt little by little and eventually become debt free. This process has been humbling to say the least, but we believe God is placing us in a position that will not allow us to do anything less than trust Him more. While the *deal* has not been sealed officially it appears that we will be selling our home of 25+ years and moving to a home that is almost double the size and *yes* we will be reducing our debt *little by little*. We thought we were

going to be down-sizing since our children are now grown, but apparently God has other plans. Can you imagine reducing your debt by buying a house almost twice the size of the one you owned before—for less money? *His ways are* [certainly] *not our ways*.

God has made it clear to me that *Signs for Hope* will boldly proclaim that we are followers of Jesus Christ. The ultimate way of enhancing the lives of each deaf and hard of hearing orphan/child He connects us with is for them to embrace Jesus Christ as their own Savior and Lord. God has allowed several faith-based organizations to provide counsel in this area over the past several months—some who boldly proclaim they are Christian and others who desire to remain obscure in this area. While I believe God can use either for His glory, as long as Truth is paramount, *Signs for Hope will not be ashamed of the Gospel* and will proclaim so without reservation. While some believe that this bold proclamation could limit our funding opportunities, I choose to believe that ALL the glory will go to our Heavenly Father for ALL the funding for *Signs for Hope*, no matter who He may lead to give financially or otherwise to this ministry. To God alone, be the glory!

There are two other vitally important areas that God has solidified for me recently. The first being the desperate need for strong pre-adoptive education/training for families seeking to adopt and/or foster deaf/HOH children. While I have known the significance of this education from the beginning, this has become even more concrete to me in the past few months. Two dear friends of mine and I had the privilege of attending the Empowered to Connect Conference in Nashville, TN in September. The main speaker, Dr. Karyn Purvis, vows to give parents the tools to meet the needs of the child that comes from "the hard places." Deaf and hard of hearing children are certainly among those coming from "the hard places." These tools must be coupled with the parents dealing with their own past issues (whatever they may be) and they must also allow the love of God to flow through them freely.

For those adoptive parents already spent emotionally, physically, spiritually, and mentally trying to deal with these children "one more way of trying" seems just a waste of time and energy. However, Karyn's stories of success are all encompassing including those children whose lives seem to be impossible to penetrate. While others throw up their hands and give up trying to "help" them, our God never gives up and He delights in taking the impossible and making it possible. I highly recommend Karyn's book "The Connected Child" and the *Empowered to Connect* website (www.empoweredtoconnect.org) for any of you who are already fostering or adopting a deaf or HOH child or contemplating doing so. Will you pray with me as I seek to set up sign language interpreters for the Deaf at the 2011 Empowered to Connect Conference in Nashville next fall?

Secondly, God has clarified the importance of *Signs for Hope* standing firm on the belief that all deaf/HOH children should be given the right to learn a manual language as soon as is feasibly possible. While *Signs for Hope* believes ultimately that each family will have to decide for each individual child what communication options are best suited for them, we will endorse the crucial importance of allowing all deaf/HOH children the opportunity to learn a manual language as their first language. Acquisition of the manual language first will enhance the child's ability to learn and even master other written languages, including English.

In addition to providing the most reasonable communication option (thus alleviating many frustrations for these precious children), *Signs for Hope* believes that God has a specific plan for each child that is deaf or HOH. He is

fully aware that the Deaf are among the 4 largest unreached people groups in the world today and no doubt His plans include preparing these children (skilled in manual language/ASL) to evangelize and disciple the Deaf here and around the world in the years to come.

As God continues to reveal specifics about the development of the organization of *Signs for Hope*, He will not allow me to overlook the needs of those deaf/HOH children living right here in Buncombe County. The "powers to be" in this county choose not to promote or support the teaching of manual language (ASL) to deaf and hard of hearing children. Years ago, there was an "ASL-friendly" preschool program offered in Buncombe County however state budget cuts sadly eliminated this program. I have begun praying about and researching the possibility of reestablishing this type of preschool program within Buncombe County and I ask that you would join *Signs for Hope* in praying for this great need. If you have any suggestions concerning this opportunity, please do not hesitate to contact me.

The *Signs for Hope* website is almost ready to officially be launched. Several aspects of the website are complete and fully functional and you can log on—www.signsforhope.org—to take advantage of those that are. The process of selling our home and everything that entails, has taken a toll on the development of the website, however in the midst of what I call a "distraction" God continues to confirm and reconfirm some of the most vital parts of what *Signs for Hope* will emulate. These are things that should be readily on the website beginning with its launch. I plan to send out an announcement in the next few weeks declaring the *Signs for Hope* website's official inauguration. It has been a pleasure working with Adam at Cube Creative Design and Consulting. I highly recommend him for any and all of your website needs. I want to publically thank those of you who financially & prayerfully supported the development of the *Signs for Hope* website. Without your obedience to our Father this would not have become a reality. This is a direct answer to our prayers which were included in the *SFH* Summer Newsletter.

Signs for Hope experienced a "first" this month. One of the initiatives I had the privilege to be involved with in Liberia in June was teaching the art of paper bead making. The goal is that one day the older girls and women in Liberia will begin to make paper bead jewelry and then sell them for their own support. As I was learning how to make these beads, before my trip, a few of my friends began to realize that this was something everyone would enjoy learning. So *Signs for Hope* held its first ever *fundraiser*–a paper bead making workshop. There were seven Deaf women and 10 hearing women in attendance. What fun we had, but greater still, this fun turned into a $485 fundraiser for *Signs for Hope*. Thank you, ladies!

Additional *Signs for Hope* prayer requests are listed below.

1) The plans for the Liberia Mission Trip 2011 are in their early stages. Please begin praying for God to reveal His plans for this trip and who He wants to go. If you are interested in possibly joining this trip to Liberia next May or

June, to work with the deaf children at the Deaf Mission, and want to know more about it please let me know ASAP. I will be more than happy to send you the information we have so far.

2) The search for *Signs for Hope* board members continues. Pray for God to make it clear who He wants on this initial board for *Signs for Hope*. If you feel God is leading you to take part in these early stages of developing this organization and beyond, please take time to write down your story including "why" and "how" you believe you could benefit *Signs for Hope* as we "coordinate the adoption of deaf orphans around the world." Please send it via email to me ASAP. beckyblloyd@gmail.com or beckylloyd@signsforhope.org

3) Please continue to pray for sponsorships of the Liberian deaf children at the Deaf Mission. The cost is only $40 per month. Twelve children have been sponsored thus far leaving **39** still needing sponsorship. These sponsorships are crucial for providing the ongoing most basic needs of life (as well as education) for these children. I have an up-to-date secure link with all of the children's pictures and their information. Please contact me if you would like to view it for sponsorship.

4) Continue praying for the fall event that will take place here in Asheville, NC in 2011. This event will be a training conference for foster/adoptive parents, social workers, and counselors—and really anyone else who loves and works with children. If you have suggestions for speakers/presenters for this conference, please let me know ASAP.

In closing, allow me to share with you an excerpt that my sister in Christ, Dawn, wrote for our churches bulletin next Sunday —Orphan Sunday.

> Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. James 1:27
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> God has spoken. He wants his people to care for children who have no one. This is what he has always wanted. At different times, we as his followers have been responsive to this desire and at other times we have not. But right now, there is a historic movement underway. It is a movement that is literally changing the world and it is doing so one church and one orphan at a time.

What a challenging—yet exciting—adventure God has planned for His Church and the orphan. Each one of us is a vital part of this great adventure, whether we realize it or not. Will you ask God how He desires for you to be involved in this movement to change the world one-by-one by *looking after orphans*? The opportunities to do so are endless. However, do not overlook the last part of the verse. As much as we desire to obey God in caring for the orphan, with that same zeal we are *to keep ourselves from being polluted by the world.* Yes, of course, God's plan is for us to care for the orphan but at the same time we are not to become polluted, corrupted, contaminated, or stained by the world as we do so. His ultimate plan is for others to see such a difference in our lives as we care for the orphan that He alone will receive all the glory for our good deeds. This is the pure presentation of the gospel—our obedience to live our lives separate from the world while caring for the orphans of the world.

I am humbled by God's calling—"to coordinate the adoption of deaf orphans in the world." Pray for me to be able to persevere as I seek His plan for obeying His call in such a way where only He will receive all the glory. Also pray that I will not allow the world to invade my life as I do so.

Only by His mercy and grace!

Becky