SIGNS FOR HOPE

Photo courtesy of Jason Luebke from their May 2014 Liberia trip.

Prayers, please, for our Liberian Brothers & Sisters & the Deaf children!

As most of you already know, Liberia, as well as, several other African countries are dealing with the effects of the Ebola virus. Our SFH October Liberia trip is officially on hold! In an effort to gain a better perspective on this most recent resurgence of Ebola, affecting those we love and especially in light of the panic the media seems to be causing here and in those countries affected, I decided to do some research on other "epidemics" through the years. In just researching historic epidemics here in the US, I found those I was unaware of.

Did you know, in 1957 (the year Charles was born), 70,000 Americans died from the Asian flu in 6 months time? I asked my mother-in-law about this event (she was 25 at the time) and she could not remember even knowing this was a concern back then. Their family did have a television in 1957 and they stayed up on current events. However, she did recall being told by others when she was a child about the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic (more than one country being affected) that killed an estimated 675,000 Americans in a matter of months and 20 million people died around the world. Obviously, this earlier epidemic impacted many more people and so much so that it became an oral story shared from one generation to the next. No need for the media to spread the news, back then. She said of the 1952 US polio epidemic, which reports more than 60,000 cases with 3,000 deaths, she could not recall knowing about this epidemic either. She did remember the polio vaccine being introduced and Charles and I both remember standing in lines to receive the oral polio vaccine in 1963 on a sugar cube (I was 4 yrs. old). For those whose lives were directly impacted by the above, panic and frenzy may have been among their reactions, as well as, grief for those who died, but obviously this information did not go "viral."

Photo courtesy of Jason Luebke from their May 2014 Liberia trip.

What I am trying to do is make us aware of how much we allow the media to control our thoughts, our fears, and our lives. I wonder how different you and I and our world would be if we allowed the Word of God to influence us on the same level as we do the media and technology, today? While I do not want to minimize the need for us to pray for and act as God leads in relation to our Liberian brothers and sisters as they face Ebola and the collateral damage the media-driven panic can cause, I do want us to think and act soberly and with His perspective.

In addition, I want us to realize how little we can truly rely on what the media and sometimes even "the powers that be" are telling us. Check out this article concerning what our own CDC reports to us as fact, "Don't Believe Everything You Read About Flu Deaths." This is just one example of many.

Gaining perspective!

Johnsonville Community, Bethlehem Compound where 20+ Deaf and 200 orphans live.
(photos courtesy Stephen Lendeh)

Dedication of the new well in Johnsonville, June 2014!

The pandemic of water-related diseases is still the major cause of children's illness and deaths around the world, today. In Uganda, alone, more than 400 die daily due to diarrheal-related diseases (2013). I am sure the same is true in Liberia and many other developing countries. That fact, alone, should cause heartache and bring tears to our eyes! In addition, between 1.5 and 1.9 million deaths (notice the broad range, 'cause they really don't know how many, but too many for sure) were caused by AIDS in the year 2011. Do not be so quick to pass judgment and say this was what they deserved as many of these deaths were children, infected by their parents and children forced into the sex-slave trafficking industry. I have to ask myself, how many times has my heart hurt enough, in the past year, just to pray for those who have suffered because of dirty water or because of AIDS? What about you?

If the water-related deaths have touched your heart, I can highly recommend Water of Life to you for donations and prayers. They are the ones responsible for digging the well at the ACFI deaf school in Liberia before SFH was involved. They have recently completed two additional wells in areas God allowed me to discover on our last trip to Liberia in Feb/March of this year, as well. Thank you, Water of Life!

To be honest, IF we DID have God's perspective, truly, we would not be trembling in fear for ourselves or our brothers and sisters as we/they experience trials of many kinds, but instead we would consider it pure joy that God is testing our faith and theirs for the purpose of producing perseverance and granting us all the blessing of being complete and mature (James 1:2-4). JOY?!? In the midst of trials of many kinds?!?! Will we really ever attain that level of abundant life God has planned for us while still clothed in this human flesh and limited by our human thinking and minds? We can, but not apart from Christ and our constant effort to renew our minds in Him (Romans 12:2).

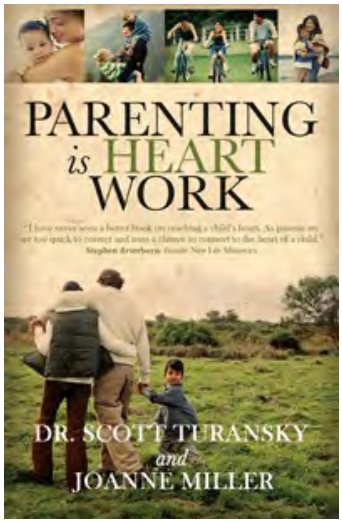
Yes, be passionate about what is affecting those we love in Liberia, but make sure it is an all-encompassing passion, one that is God-driven by the Word of God and not dictated by our emotions and/or the media.

Never Stop Learning!

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." ~ 2 Timothy 3:16-17

One of the areas I have felt Signs for Hope to be most weak in, over the past few years, was our ability to regularly and continuously undergird those caring for and raising deaf children with His truth, especially in a more deaf-friendly way. I believe God has answered that concern through our recent connection with the National Center for Biblical Parenting (NCBP) through one of our own SFH adoptive moms, Kathy Loo.

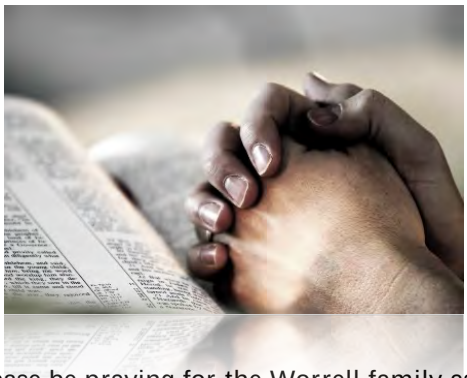
It was 'one of those days' when Kathy was at her wits end trying to figure out why it was so hard to attain lasting behavior change for her children. Her Google search led her to the NCBP website. Not long after, she checked in with me to see if I had heard about them. I had not. A quick look at their website revealed their Parenting is Heart Work Seminar schedule and the fact they would be in NC October 17th. Kathy emailed to thank them for their invaluable resources and ask if they could some way make their materials more visually oriented to help adopted deaf children understand the biblical concepts more easily, especially given the limited language many have when they come home. Dr. Scott Turansky, one of the founders, emailed back to say they would be delighted to do that, IF someone could tell them *how* to do it. My curiosity got the best of me and I began searching their schedule for other places they would be teaching, as well. It 'just so happened' they were planning three seminar trainings in the Denver area while Charles and I were there visiting in July. I knew I had to attend at least one and meet with Dr. Scott Turansky, face-to-face. I actually attended all three. And I am so impressed by their focus on the Word of God and the relationship God so desires to have with each of our children and us, through parenting!



Charles and I met with Scott on Thursday, July 24th, before the first seminar. After chatting a while, Scott suggested their "presenter training" for myself and others involved at SFH. I suggested this training to our most recently added SFH board member, Jonathan Walterhouse, and we are praying about the possibility of traveling in October to LA for this year's training. If any others are interested, please email me for more information. To learn more about why I am so enthusiastic about this organization and their training check out the "What We Believe" pages on their website and read some of their blog posts. Chances are this is what you are looking for for your own children, grandchildren, or those you teach at church and/or school. They have vast materials available for support for families, churches and schools including a special needs section. If you can't find what you need via the websites, email and ask them.

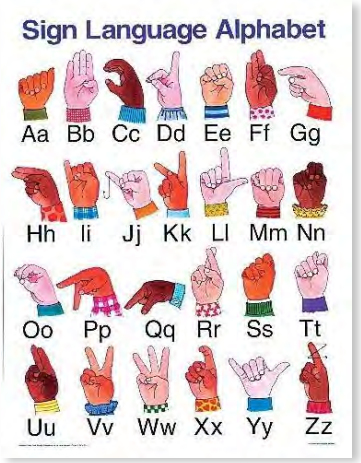
Not only will the Center for Biblical Parenting and their "Parenting is Heart Work" training be a great resource for the SFH deaf adoptive families, but this training will also be used in Liberia with those giving care and teaching the deaf children. Thank God for providing, abundantly, in this specific area of ongoing spiritual training and support for those who love and care for deaf children around the world! Pray for God to continue to lead in this connection and how best to improve their materials for use with deaf children of all backgrounds.

On June 30th, I started the 10-week pre-course work for the Trust-Based Relational Interventions Training Course offered by Texas Christian University (Dr. Karyn Purvis). This is truly an upper-level course and I would appreciate your prayers as I continue working through the next 6+ weeks of the pre-course materials and then the on-campus weeklong coursework September 22nd – 26th. It is amazing how this training and the Center for Biblical Parenting complement each other. I remain humbled by Show Hope's willingness to scholarship this $3,000 course to me.



Additional Opportunities for Praise & Prayer!

- Please be praying for the Worrell family as they are in the process of adopting their 4th deaf child, this time domestically. The Worrell's are in search of an older 12-passenger van to accommodate the entire family in one vehicle, as well. Praise God for many who have already supported this family during this process through prayer and donations. Tracy begins a new job interpreting in the educational setting this fall. Ask God to continue to provide for the needs of this growing family!
- Pray for the Empowered to Connect conference in Washington, DC, September 12-13
- Pray for God to make all things clear for the Parenting is Heart Work presenter training offered by NCBP in October.
- The American Society for Deaf Children (ASDC) conference last month was excellent. Vandora and I learned much and we made some of those awe inspiring God-connections while there.
- Pray for God to continue to touch hearts to support the ministry of Signs for Hope and thank Him for those He has already touched to do so.
- Ask God to use and spread the recently launched SFH blog series, "So You Want to Adopt a Deaf Child?" This series is being shared in an effort to raise awareness and educate adoption agencies and families concerning the many aspects of adopting a deaf child that are rarely ever discussed and to raise the bar for "Best Practices When Adopting the Deaf Child".
- Pray for the many SFH families who are transitioning with their recently adopted deaf children, especially as the new school year begins.
- Pray for those in the final stages of the adoption process as God continues to equip them to bring their deaf children home before the end of 2014.
- Pray for families who have recently been in crisis with their adopted children as these precious children deal with the vast trauma they have endured. Praise God for the additional support materials that are being developed because of these crises.
- Pray for our Signs for Hope board members as we meet together for our quarterly board meeting later this month and ask God to give great wisdom and discernment when making decisions.
- And finally, pray for us as we continue planning our family-focused Fall 2014 (November) SFH Deaf Awareness & Silent Auction event. We need to finalize the date and the place ASAP. Possible name: "No Language Spoken Hear." We are excited about this unique hands-on, experiential event and the possibilities it has to raise awareness about deafness across Western North Carolina. We are inviting SFH adoptive families to be here, too. All the fun details will be shared in the September 2014 SFH PrayerLetter. Volunteers to help with this event will be needed, as will Silent Auction entries. Contact me if you want to be a part of this unique event.



From my heart to yours…

"I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." ~John 16:33

"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." ~John 14:27

God's peace is unlike any peace this world can generate. It is not the absence of conflict, as Webster and others define, but it is a soul-satisfied peace that is ours in the very midst of the conflict and uncertainty. Obviously, when Jesus was speaking to His disciples in the book of John, just before His crucifixion, He knew what each one of them would have to face for the rest of their earthly lives. And we can be assured He was speaking to us, as well, as He prays for us in John 17, verses 20 & 21. "My prayer is not for them alone, I pray also for those who will believe in Me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in Us so that the world may believe that You have sent Me."

The relationship Jesus had with His Father—that oneness—is the same relationship God desires for you and me to have with Him and with each other, all our other brothers and sisters in Christ. Apparently, it is through our oneness that others may believe that the Father sent the Son.

How would you rate our oneness with each other? More importantly, how does God rate our oneness with each other? Back in John 13:35, Jesus' words are crystal clear: "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." I wonder, do others have enough evidence to prove us guilty of being His disciples? How is it we can even love each other? God's love working in us is the only way we can love each other! I commit to daily ask God to love others through me better. Will you do the same? So that everyone will know we are His disciples and believe the Father has sent the Son!

I love you and I am praying for you, but Jesus loves you so much more and He, too, is praying for you!

Becky

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Check out some recent SFH blog posts!

In You, the fatherless find compassion. - Hosea 14:3