Signs for Hope

Seven Years!

March 18, 2015, marked seven years since God called me to "coordinate the adoption of deaf orphans in the world". SEVEN YEARS! That is mind-boggling for me on so many levels! Yes, those first 4 years were filled with a constant searching for what exactly it was God was calling me to do and miraculous God-connections that have given SFH the strong foundation we have in the Christian orphan care movement. Those amazing God-connections, covering the gamut of our ministry, continue to this day! I often go back and re-read the archived letters I have shared with you since early 2009. It is so important for us to be able to look back and see all God has done in His faithfulness to do what He promises us He will do. If you do not journal, at least on some level, I highly recommend you start. The encouragement, the awe, often the ability to persevere comes from reading what God has faithfully accomplished in the midst of some pretty tough and/or uncertain situations in our past, just what we need to keep on keeping on when things seem to be falling apart around us.

Then I look back beyond those seven years to the foundational truths of scripture God has instilled in me through many years as I have studied His Word personally and corporately with my brothers and sisters in Christ. Truths He has brought back to mind which have become the support beams rising from the foundation, God Himself, to undergird Signs for Hope in this process of following Him each step of the way. I have told many, especially recently, in those first few years, since there were no models to follow for this particular kind of ministry, I was forced to follow God for each step. He knew I would need to have those limitations so I would not deviate from His plan, His way. I am so thankful that was the case as that does make it somewhat easier to look to Him, now, when there are some options to "what" we will do and "how" we are to accomplish whatever He leads us to do.

One unmistakable truth, which He continues to keep forefront on my mind, "What do I already have?" Followed quickly by, "Give thanks to God for all of it, whatever it is, and then give it back to Him and let Him multiply it." Check out my blog post for some additional details surrounding this topic from last year. This is one way Jesus taught His disciples to approach what seemed like an impossible situation of feeding the 5,000+ followers. Not enough money and then no place to buy the food. While the miracle was truly that God multiplied what they had to be more than enough, the lesson itself, I believe, was to ask, "What do I already have?" Give thanks for whatever it is and let God multiply it as He sees fit, for His glory. That is one way we also approach the financial support for Signs for Hope.

This...is...ADOPTION!

I always wondered how I would experience adoption, up-close-and-personal, since God did not call Charles and me to adopt. In 2012, three years ago this month, God opened the opportunity for me to travel with Larry and Dawn Barnes as their ASL interpreter to bring their deaf adopted son, Tie, home from China. What an incredible experience! I have the honor of sharing with you the most important decision Tie will every make, through his mom's FB post on April 13th.

"We have some news to share... Yesterday morning our hearts burst with joy! Tie came to us and told us, "Last night I asked Jesus to come into my heart! I now have a new life!" Wow! This definitely made our hearts happy! Larry and I are overwhelmed at how God is working in his life. Please pray for him as he begins a new journey in life. Thanks!"

When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

Galatians 4:4-6

Liberia Update

"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

Matthew 25:23

I want to highlight the life of a Liberian man, Zayzay Barwain, who has positively impacted many of the Deaf children and young adults in Liberia via agriculture training over the past 5 plus years. I received word Zayzay died in his sleep April 6th. This was a shock to all, but especially his family and friends. He had been doing what he loved most just the day before, riding his motorbike to various sites empowering his Liberian brothers and sisters to learn how to grow and maintain sustainable food sources. This was a skill the current generation(s) had missed learning because of the length of the civil wars spanning portions of 3 decades and the displacement of so many of those who had lived off their land, previously. Zayzay was one who persevered. In those early years, following the wars, when some of his efforts were without much impact for a variety of reasons, however this never deterred his zeal. I remember, my last conversation with Zayzay, just over a year ago the last time I was there, he was giddy with excitement of the prospect of some new possibilities for the Deaf Mission. Zayzay is sorely missed. Please pray for God's comfort for his family and his friends and please ask God to raise up a "Joshua" to carry on the work Zayzay began.

I am still asking for prayer concerning the next SFH trip to Liberia. I was hoping to travel back to Liberia next month with a small 2 or 3 person team.I am asking God to open the door for a reconnaissance trip to evaluate changes due to the Ebola crisis, before we begin our fully-phased teams traveling on a regular basis as we walk along-side the Deaf teachers and educators in the deaf schools across Liberia, seeking to improve the education of their deaf children. Keep in mind, when I say "education" that include needed academics, life-skills training, vocational trade training and biblical training. In addition, we will also train those caring for the deaf children TBRI & NCBP strategies for helping them cope with the trauma they have experienced in their own lives and implementing what they learn to help in the healing process of these precious deaf children who have also experienced trauma.

It's Monday, April 13th and Charles and I are currently on a plane in San Antonio, awaiting the go-ahead for our departure to return to Asheville. Some minor mechanical work needs to be done and the required paperwork for that work must also be completed. So, I thought I would take advantage of this "extra" time.

The next 10 weeks, for me, are full to overflowing with travel. The end of this month, I will drive over to Nashville for CAFO2015. Christian Alliance for Orphans' (CAFO) annual conference has been one Charles and I have been committed to attend, if at all possible, since 2009. We are excited to see, once again, all God will do through this year's conference. If you would like to join me, it is not too late. Email me, beckyblloyd@gmail.com, for more details, asap.

Charles and I have an unexpected treat in May; we will be flying out to Denver to see Joseph and Kate, his new bride. We are so thankful for this opportunity as we have not seen them since their wedding last October. Undoubtedly, God has some additional connections for us, ministry-wise, while we are there. Please join us in thanking God for this opportunity and pray we will not miss anything or anyone.

June 11 – 20th will be SFH's first trip to Vietnam. Through one of those amazing God-connections, via the Internet, a partnership was born with Orphan Voice in late 2013. New Beginnings School for the Deaf was opened last November. It is not too late to join SFH on this inaugural trip, as well. We will be spending much time with the deaf children, their teacher(s), and their families on this trip. Let me know, asap, IF God is leading you to join SFH on this new adventure and inspiring trip to Vietnam.

The American Society for Deaf Children's annual conference is in Indianapolis at the Indiana School for the Deaf, June 24 – 30th. I will be driving up on Wednesday and have some space in my car for others to join me. I will be presenting some basic principles surrounding TBRI (Trust-based Relational Interventions) in one of their many workshops and we will also have an exhibit table. This is another one of those conferences where God does some amazing enlightening and connecting and I cannot wait to see all He has planned this year.

Some Additional Opportunities for Praise and Prayer include:

- Deaf Adoptive Families – God is working in the midst of some very challenging situations
- Possible training for additional SFH board members for TBRI (Trust-Based Relational Interventions) and NCBP (National Center for Biblical Parenting), this fall.
- Please be praying for the development of a nation-wide Deaf Mentor Database for adoptive families as they traverse through learning ASL and relating to their newly adopted deaf children, at the same time. I know you are wondering why it is that families who do not know sign language are allowed to adopt deaf children, but they are, consistently, therefore we must come along-side them to support them as the challenges are great to connect with that child in the first year of being home. This will be highly structured and monitored with already developed materials and guidelines for optimum benefit. This mentoring program will most often be facilitated through virtual means, as our families live in 32 different states, but may also be local if there are families living in close proximity of the Deaf Mentors. If you know of any Deaf folks that have the time and expertise for this kind of mentoring, please ask them to contact me, mailto:beckyblloyd@gmail.com.
- New and improved Signs for Hope website upgrade. Thankfully, the cost for this enhancement provided by Cube Creative Designs is $600. Please pray God will help us know how best to utilize this new technology that will now be available to us. Thank God for Jonathan Walterhouse, one of our SFH board members, as he delights in handling this.

From my heart to yours ...

SFH remains an all-volunteer ministry. No one is compensated for the things they do to benefit SFH. God may change this approach at some point, but we are thankful for how He is leading us and providing for us, now. He is now connecting us with folks whom He has gifted and trained in specific ways and who are willing to share those gifts and skills with us as we reach out to meet the needs of deaf children and those who raise and care for them, wherever God leads. He is multiplying their gifts, offered willingly, of working with their hands and minds in ways we could never be able to repay. God, alone, will do that, adequately. How many times do we, God's children, just throw up our hands in desperation and say, "There is not enough money to do _____, therefore we can't _____"? Instead, why not throw up our hands and say, "I'm letting go and letting God…do whatever it is He wants to do, whatever way He wants to do it, in whatever time He chooses is best and with whoever He wants to do it with and through. If He says He will supply my needs and your needs and every deaf child's needs on this planet…I believe He will do that and often more. It is when you and I decide what WE THINK are "needs" He should provide, instead of allowing God to show us what HE KNOWS are our "needs", that we get into trouble. Our total surrender to His perspective on "needs" will reach beyond our wildest dreams and ALL FOR HIS GLORY!

First, you and I must know what God's will is and then ask Him to accomplish that and all for His glory. If we are not constantly asking Him to show us His will through His word, through wise-counsel, through circumstances and through the wisdom and knowledge He gives, you and I just might miss something great He has already planned. This process of seeking His will, as we are constantly aware of His presence with us throughout the day is one that will bring us into a much deeper relationship with Him. So often you and I "assume" we know God's will and never stop to even ask Him. It was the same with Joshua after entering the Promised Land. God had spelled out "how" they were to defeat their enemy on one occasion and the enemy was trounced. Joshua "assumed" that would be the same way they were to defeat the enemy the next time. EHHH! WRONG ANSWER! When Joshua led the Israelites on the next encounter with the enemy, Israel was sorely defeated. God's desire is for you and me to enquire of Him for His will, today, not depend on what His will was for yesterday. He wants that one-on-one, intimate relationship built on trust, with you and me, every single day.

While SFH has tried a variety of ways of raising funds for the things we have identified as "needs", in the eyes of the world, over the past 5 years, we have had varying successful at the surprise of many. Signs for Hope, over the past few years, can unmistakably identify one specific way God continuously blesses and that is through His personal touching of folks hearts whom He wants to be partnering with us in this service to others. For the most part, God does not choose, or at least He has not thus far, to use typical fundraisers to raise our greatest support, but instead He delights in doing this through individuals and a few churches He inspires to give from the overflow of their hearts. While we are open to whatever way God chooses to financially support this ministry, His current way seems the most endearing and encouraging for us. We do specifically pray God will touch the hearts of those folks He desires to walk along with us financially, in addition to praying, in this ministry of His called Signs for Hope. Will you join us in praying for this, as well?

Since some of you might be curious as to the number of current active donors SFH is blessed by, allow me to outline some fascinating details for you, so you can join us in thanking God for His abundant provision. In February of 2012, we started from scratch, as SFH became an "official" public ministry seeking support from others, individuals and churches, for this work. It was all too obvious Charles and I could no longer support this ministry from our own pockets. Some of these consistent "general fund" donations are received on a monthly basis, some, whenever God leads, and still others, annually.

In 2013, there were 15 families and one church who donated $28,905. In 2014, there were 14 families and two churches regularly giving undesignated monies to SFH in the amount of $33,343.04. A third church has now joined those partnering with us for 2015. In addition, for those specific needs we have shared, aside from the general monies donated, additional donations have come in to meet those needs, as well. It is amazing to just let God do what He wants to do and through those He wants to use.

As Charles and I attended a Fund-raising Boot Camp in February of 2012 the verse that has continued to impact us is found in 2 Corinthians. It challenges us on a personal level and it blesses us as we see God doing the same with some of you He is touching to

And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people. And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us.
2 Corinthians 8:1-5

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