

Tabitha: Food for LIFE

2009

May 2009: I have really been struck lately with the situation of some of the kids in our program and their deep need for love in its simplest form- a hug or an arm on the back or even being picked up and held for a while. A couple nights ago we had a cultural night for a team that is visiting from Denmark. They are a great bunch of kids and have obviously been very well trained. They will be with us for a total of about 2 weeks. Anyway, it was my responsibility to drive a team of Filipino martial arts performers back to their gym after they finished performing for us. As I was leaving I asked Jericho, one of the kids in the feeding program, to join me and ride with me to drop off the performers. He is 11 years old and is no longer in school. Jericho finished grade 3 a few years back, but since then he has not been able to go to school because his family cannot afford it. On our drive back I asked him where his mother was and he said "trabaho," meaning working.

Next, I asked him where his father was and he said "bulag," which at the time I did not know the meaning of, so I asked him "Unsa man na?" which means 'What is that?' He explained to me in Visayan that Liz and I were married and that she was my wife and he put his two fingers together. Then he pulled his fingers apart and said "bulag" again. I immediately understood what he meant- his parents are separated. I can't explain the feeling that came over me as we were driving back to HOJ as tears formed in my eyes. To see this young little guy from a broken family without the opportunity to go to school and without things like proper clothes or shoes, hit me in a fresh way as he explained in a matter of fact fashion about his broken family.

I am not even sure why it hit me the way it did, I see these kinds of things all the time. I felt compassion, sadness, and somehow joy for being able to talk to him about it and spend time with him. Even more so, a sense of affirmation came over me that what we are trying to do here is exactly what God wants. I know our primary goal is to feed the kids out of pure mercy but I believe that behind that is the heartbeat of God to love these kids. I have had this feeling a lot lately, like a feeling of overwhelming compassion and love for people, like God is filling my heart with love for them. Through feeding these kids we are given a window into their lives to reach out and touch them with the love that God has shown us. There are times while working among the poor that you feel as though you are not making a difference or that what you are doing is not really needed, but through moments like these I have come to realize that God is pleased with what we are doing here.

When we got back to HOJ Jericho ran off to watch the rest of the program. By the time I got into HOJ the cultural program was almost finished and the team was enjoying an assortment of fresh fruits and treats native to the Philippines. When the team had had their fill they opened up the table to the kids who were around, most of them being kids from Tabitha: Food for Life. It was a bit of a wild time as they snatched up some tasty treats. One of the younger girls from the feeding program got herself a big piece of watermelon. It looked very good. The joy in her eyes was hard to ignore. This little girl lives in one of the worst squatter homes that I have seen. Their floor has many large holes and there is a lot of garbage and feces and other waste underneath their home. It is very humid and smelly. There is no way that it can be a healthy place to live. The girl is very malnourished and has a condition called thrush. The skin is cracked at the corners of her mouth. Thrush is caused by a fungal infection that is often brought on by a weakened immune system due to things like disease or as in this case undernourishment. It's a hard thing to clear up because every time you open your mouth it opens the sores. She often gets teased by the other kids and Liz has been doing her best to treat it and keep it clean.

To see her smile at the watermelon brought such joy to my heart. I called her over to me and put my hands on her shoulder and looked her in the eye and asked her if she was happy and if the water melon was good. She smiled and said yes. Not sure why this struck me but as I have been thinking about it, this is the same smile and sparkle I see in her eyes and many others as I see them participating in the feeding program. I thank that Lord that he allowed me to see these moments of pure joy. It is all His doing! I have not put any pictures in this months newsletter for the feeding program as I just wanted more space for my thoughts. Well, I'd like to leave you with a few words from Proverbs 4:27-28 (NASB)

Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, When it is in your power to do it. Do not say to your neighbor, "Go, and come back, And tomorrow I will give it." When you have it with you."

Please pray for God's anointing that as we give what we have and that the precious little ones would be touched by God. Thank you for your continued love and support.