

### Bake Me A Cake First

That day was a day I will always remember. We were at the Village of Hope Orphanage in Da Nang and had been doing some construction work on the grounds, followed by games with the children. Once finished with the work and the festivities, one by one, the children took us by the hand and led us into the dining hall. The oscillating fans did little to alleviate the heat and humidity and the little dogs running in and out of the hall did little to inspire my appetite, but I would rather have been there than in the courts of Queen Elizabeth.

The children began to serve us our meal as if they had waited for us to visit them for their whole lives. Broad smiles came along with each bowl of soup, ear of steamed corn and loaf of French bread. Each team member was surrounded by at least five children who, in between bites of food, doted on us and saw to our every need and perceived desire, as if they were the proud grandparents of a new grandchild.

In the midst of all this activity one of the other team members looked at me and said, “You know this is a treat for them, they only get rice and a little milk each day.” The truth of their situation was driven home even more when, after the meal, I saw them collecting every crumb of leftover food. This would supplement their diet in the days to come. They had given us their best and saved the leftover food for themselves. This is the graciousness of the Vietnamese people.

Nevertheless, as a well-fed American, I could not help but feel humbled by their sacrifice as I walked among the children. And although this was not a Christian run orphanage, they had behaved in a way that even Christ would commend. It reminds me of the passage in 1 Kings 17 where the prophet Elijah told the widow to bake him a cake/loaf of bread before she made one for her son and herself. It was a challenge for the woman. The country was suffering from a famine and the meal and the oil she had was all she had left in the world. What caused her to obey his words? I think the widow knew something very important.

First of all, even in a time of famine, she knew God calls us to honor His work—even if it means sacrifice.

Secondly, she knew God takes care of those who put Him first.

Of course, when we realized that the leftover food would be given to the children we made sure to eat very little. The more we left, the more they would have. Imagine the joy of the little girl, pictured to the left, when she was able to gather up this armload of bread that would feed her and her friends for days to come. Being deaf and mute, she could not hear our words or speak to us, but she could enjoy the provisions left behind.

If we, with our imperfect hearts, would seek to bless those who we love and have need, how much more will our Father in heaven take care of us (Matthew 7:11)?

Even the children at the orphanage knew the wisdom of honoring those who were able and willing to help them. How much more should we hold true to these same truths? How much more should we honor the One who is able and willing to take care of us?

If you ever wanted to make a difference in this world, or in someone's life, or for the Kingdom of God, this is it! This is your time! By faith we have sent you the enclosed envelope believing, in spite of your need today, you will "bake the Lord a cake first." Thank you for putting the Lord first today!

Few things can be as disheartening as being overlooked by someone you hope or expect will notice you. To speak and not be heard, to hurt and not be cared for, to labor and not find rest—this can break a person's spirit.

Perhaps this is why the words of Exodus 3:7 had such an effect on one Vietnamese woman. Read with me, "And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows..." KJV. These words spoken by God to Moses about the Israelites in Egyptian bondage were the topic of my devotion one morning in Vietnam. In an abbreviated form this is the essence of this passage: God says, "I have seen, I have heard, I know." Powerful words for someone who felt forgotten.

This simple message had a powerful effect on the woman sitting before me. She had just returned to Vietnam with us for the first time since the fall of Saigon at the end of the Vietnam War. As she would later tell us, for years the Vietnamese people who lost their country have sung a song that says in essence, "Where are you God? Can you not see? Can you not hear?"

Riding down the roads of Vietnam with memories washing over her, sadness, and questions from the past of "why" filling her mind, it was like the finger of God tapped her on the shoulder and a voice whispered, "I have seen, I have heard, I know." But He had more to say.

When it comes to great needs in the world people often ask, "Why doesn't God do something about that?" "Doesn't God see?" "Doesn't God know?" "Doesn't God care?" You may have even asked some of these same questions about situations or great needs you have also observed. Well? What does God have to say for Himself?

In verse 8 God also goes on to say that he had come to help His people—and He had—but in verse 10 He says to Moses, "I am sending you."

Get the message? God works, helps, and loves through us! Before anyone asks, He does not want to "wave His hand" or "speak these things into existence." He wants those "made in His image" to be His hands, His eyes, and His voice. The Apostle Paul says that we are Christ's "ambassadors...as though God were making his appeal through us." (2 Cor. 5:20) That is where this newsletter comes in—if I may be so bold—God is making His appeal through us and He wants to do His work through you!