

as the headmaster, then harm would come upon his family. In Ugandan culture, jealousy is common – some people envy those who are more successful, so they often try to pull others down to their lower level. There is also much competition between the schools as they are often run like businesses. So far, the police and others have been unable to identify who wrote the note given to Pastor Michael. We will continue to encourage Michael and surround his family with prayers for their protection. We are grateful that – at least for now – this type of persecution is not a common occurrence here in the USA.

Our 5 clinics at 5 different villages included seeing over 700 medical patients, 199 dental patients, and filling over 2500 total Rx's. To God be the glory! With much gratitude, I pray that God will provide the resources for us to continue serving Him and spreading the good news of His love, wherever in the world we may be, through word and deed.



*Christ follower, photographer, pharmacist, husband, lover of God's word. Currently pharmacist at Walgreens Specialty pharmacy in West Palm Beach, FL. Preceptor and Clinical Assistant Professor of Pharmacy Practice at Palm Beach Atlantic University. Member at Family Church, West Palm Beach, FL. Married to Lisa Sorensen who is my best friend and missionary partner. I am passionate about using my photography skills to help reveal God's creativity and encourage others. Lives in Royal Palm Beach, FL.*

## Leave Your Fear Behind, Trust Him Fully

By Samantha Axtell

As a parent, many things may come across your mind that you would long for your child to experience in life. Most importantly, as a parent you desire to see your child grow in the fear and admonition of the Lord. In doing so, if a child professes to know the Lord, then the parent prays they produce fruit since God's word states that faith without works is dead. Another desire one may have is to see their child's faith lived out by sharing the Gospel with others. Lastly, a common longing many parents have for their children is to become more aware of those in need around them and to experience life outside of the "bubble." With the last being said, many parents are unsure how to best position their child for such an experience that would allow them to see the needs of others. One of the many ways to do this could include mission trip participation.

Several years ago, the opportunity arose to take our family overseas on a medical mission trip. Many questions flooded my mind, such as: *Are our children too young? What if something happens while we are there? What will they be exposed to while there? Will they be able to assist, or will they get too tired and/or disinterested in the activities? Is it safe? They have never flown before... will they be okay?* The "what ifs" continued to flood my thoughts.

The Lord was extremely kind as He always is and reminded me of His words in Philippians 4:6-7 [NASB] – "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." My husband and I prayed over the opportunity, asking God for His wisdom for our decision, and the Lord graciously provided us the guidance and peace that He promises. We agreed to join the trip as a family and we're so thankful we did.

The Lord had amazing things in store for us during that time. We could have never imagined it would impact our hearts as greatly as it did. People often say, "I went to serve and be a blessing, but instead I was the one who was blessed." This statement could not be more true with our mission trip experience. During our time overseas we conducted several medical clinics, which afforded us the opportunity to share the Gospel with hundreds of patients while they waited to be seen by a physician. The beauty of participating in medical missions is that the patients come with a desire for healing from their physical ailments, but we have the opportunity to share the Gospel with them, where true and eternal healing comes from. During these moments of sharing, the patients are willing to listen much more intently since their situations leave them in a vulnerable condition. What better opportunity is there than to share God's plan of salvation to an individual in such great need!

Throughout the trip, our children quickly adapted to unique transportation experiences, different lodging accommodations, and other nuisances; and they were viewed as an adventure instead of an annoyance. Their responses quickly reminded me of James chapter 1 where we are told to consider it joy when we face trials. How quickly we can respond by grumbling and complaining, instead of obeying Philippians 2:14 [NASB] where we are commanded to "do all things without grumbling or disputing". The Lord kindly reminded us of His goodness in all things, as He empowered our

children to avoid these behaviors.

It turned out that my concern for our children becoming tired or disinterested was unnecessary. The Lord provided them with energy and excitement for each task. Whatever job they were assigned, they worked hard to complete it to the best of their God-given abilities. There was never a job they considered too big or too small – each task was important and taken seriously. As far as my fear of their safety, the Lord gently reminded me that He is their Creator and our children belong to Him. God is their Protector and Sustainer, and my trust needs to lie in Him alone. I was grateful that my concern for their safety and their work ethic was unwarranted.

From a mother's point of view, it was incredible to see my family interact and serve those around them. The Lord allowed our children to look beyond the physical ailments of the patients and see them as individuals in need of a Savior. With each opportunity they had, they strived to show the love of Christ to those coming to the medical clinics. It was humbling to sit and listen to the stories of the individuals my family was able to meet, and those patients impacted each of us in mighty ways. We were all reminded of how blessed we are to have clean water, shelter, clothing, healthcare, education, and so much more. Most importantly, we rejoice in the privilege of knowing our Lord and Savior and being able to call Him Abba Father... but our hearts break that so many do not truly know Him. We are overwhelmed by the grace He has poured out on us.

Had we forgone this missions opportunity, we would have not experienced the many blessings the Lord had in store for us. Since then, we've had another opportunity to participate in a second medical mission trip as a family. I am beyond grateful that the Lord allowed my heart to be open to such a unique opportunity for our family to participate in, and to praise His name together for His work in the hearts of many.

Our children were able to experience amazing interactions and moments that will forever be impressed upon their hearts. They frequently share the story of a man who came to our clinic in a wheelchair since he is a double amputee. Our children claim that whenever they began to get hot or tired, they would think of this man who always had a smile from ear to ear, exuding pure joy despite his physical circumstances. He would navigate his wheelchair throughout clinic thanking all of us for our assistance, and we thanked him for his powerful testimony. He loved the Lord and displayed what "peace that passes all understanding" and "inexpressible and glorious joy" really looks like in the life of a believer. Our family will always have his sweet example engrained in our minds.

When we ask our children for their thoughts about having been on two mission trips, they say that they are beyond grateful for the opportunity to have participated. They were

thankful to be able to provide both spiritual and physical care, but they feel more blessed than those they strived to serve. They also claim that these experiences allowed them to see certain areas in their lives that need to change, including impatience and pride. And lastly, the most recent mission trip reminded them that we are not promised tomorrow... so we must live each moment as if it is our last, since we never know when our Lord will call us home.

What is keeping you from including your family on your next mission trip? Is it fear? Anxiety? The "what-ifs"? Do not allow unbelief in your heart to reign. God is sovereign over all; He is Creator and Sustainer. Go to the Lord and ask for His wisdom as you seek to do His will. James 1:5-6 [NASB] states: "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind." Go to Him in prayer believing wholeheartedly that He will give you the wisdom to grasp the opportunities He has placed before you. Trust Him fully, do not depend upon yourself. He alone is your source of wisdom; He is your family's Protector and Provider. He created each and every one of us and sustains us. He can be trusted fully. Do not fear, trust Him completely, and follow in obedience to His calling.



*Samantha Axtell is an Assistant Professor of Pharmacy Practice at the Lloyd L. Gregory School of Pharmacy and has a clinic site at a nearby indigent clinic where she is able to serve patients who are uninsured and provide medication management of their chronic conditions. She is a co-advisor for the school's CPFI chapter and counts it an immense privilege to share Christ with those around her and pray with and for her students. More importantly she would pray that her role as a wife, mother, foster mother, and friend would exemplify her love for the Lord and that her steps would walk in a manner worthy of His calling.*