

## October 2007 Prayer Newsletter—CALL TO PRAYER—Andrea Herman

*“Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much.  
But he who has been forgiven little loves little.” Luke 7:47*

In day to day life here, I see a lot of things that aren't so “visible” back in the States. People with mental illnesses, or mental disabilities wander the streets, as do the blind, walking around begging for alms. Sickness and death are not always kept hidden away inside homes or hospitals. Infant mortality is high, despite the well-intentioned attempts of families to provide treatments for various ailments.

One of the many dangers for infants is dehydration (often a result of diarrhea), which can lead to death. In babies, one of the symptoms of dehydration is that the soft spot on top of their heads will be sunken in. Mothers take this condition seriously, and quickly mix a paste of various things, like crushed leaves and cow poop, and apply it to their baby's head, to remedy the sunkenness. They want more than anything for their child to be healthy again. They feel like they are doing the best thing possible by applying cow poop paste to their baby's head. However, despite their good intentions, the problem has nothing to do with the baby's head. The sunkenness is a *symptom* of a more serious problem. If the more serious internal problem is not addressed, the baby will die.

How many of us have external symptoms of internal problems that we try to cover up with a form of useless “cow poop?” It is so easy in our externally focused world to concern ourselves only with what is seen on the outside. We worry about having the “right” clothes, or fitting into a certain size of clothes. We have an endless supply of “beauty” products and services available for purchase, from wrinkle reducers, hair coloring, skin toner, blemish concealers, to you name it - the cosmetic companies claim to be able to “hide” whatever you don't like about your physical appearance. The question is, “Is what we look like (or don't like) the real problem?”

The *real* problem started back when Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the garden of Eden, and we continue to carry on their legacy as we disobey God today. That problem of disobedience is also known as sin. Unfortunately, sin has a consequence, its death. Everything in the world that *we* try to do to “fix” our death problem is about as helpful as putting cow poop paste on our heads. No amount of trying to cover up the symptoms will change the reality. We are stuck in our sin, and without God's help we will die and suffer for all eternity, away from God.

Since it was God who created us, it is He also who can rescue us from the consequences of our actions. However, since God is perfect and just, he can't permissively excuse our wrongs, they must be paid for. *“For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.” (1 Peter 3:18).* Why would God bother to rescue us from the consequences of our own disobedient actions? *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16).* Is there anyone else you know that loves you that much?

You may be thinking that since you did such and such a thing, or because you didn't do something you knew you “should have” done, that God's promises aren't for you. Nothing is further from the truth. There is nothing too big for God to forgive. Why? Because Jesus already paid the price for every sin each of us has committed, and ever will commit, on the cross. It was the most expensive and lavish gift ever given, and it is ours!

In the seventh chapter of Luke, a prostitute approached Jesus, while he was in the midst of eating with Pharisees (legalistic Jewish religious leaders). She began to weep, kissing Jesus' feet, and drying His tear-wetted feet with her hair. She then poured an expensive jar of perfume over his feet. Why would this

outcast of a woman risk harassment and insult to shower Jesus with these gifts? Because she had been given the greatest gift of all—forgiveness for her sins. She knew better than anyone the sinful life she had led, and how she had not followed God in the past, so the gift of God's forgiveness in her life overwhelmed her with gratitude.

You and I may not have lived as prostitutes, but we all have dark things in our lives for which we need forgiveness, whether they are things we have done, things we have failed to do, or evil thoughts we have entertained. Though we might like to console our conscience by telling ourselves that we aren't the worst of the sinners, the truth is, sin is sin. We might feel worse about sins which have harmed others, but an evil thought or misusing God's name are as much sins as premeditated murder. Each of them cost Jesus His life.

In reality, there is no possible way we can ever repay God for the gift of forgiveness He has given us through Jesus. God doesn't ask us to "repay" Him. What He gives us is a gift. We can't earn God gifts, but we can thank Him for them. (Isn't that the least we could do?) How can we express our thanks to God? By loving Him with everything that He has given us. If we think about all we've been saved from: sin, death, and the power of the devil—that gift of salvation gives us freedom in Christ, so that we are no longer slaves to sin. We have been given the gift of eternal life in heaven, to spend all of eternity praising God for His grace and mercy. It seems like thanking God for His goodness would be the most natural reaction, in response to the amazing and eternal gift we have received.

Please join me in thanking God for:

- everyone who was praying specifically during the last days of Ramadan, God has opened a door to my (staunchly Muslim) language helper's family!
- 2 new Maninka believers! (One of the men is a widely known & respected teacher, who is excited about sharing the truth with his students!) May his influence be used for God's glory.
- getting my primary language helper back after Ramadan
- some encouragement in language learning: it was short lived, but very helpful
- safe travels and good meetings with Paul & Joy Mueller, and Fred Reinhardt this month
- His amazing gifts of love and forgiveness that He offers to everyone

Please join me in asking God to provide:

- MUCH wisdom, discernment and boldness as I try to step through this door of opportunity that the Lord has opened with my language helper's family
- clear focus & effectiveness in language learning
- strength & encouragement for these 2 new believers, and for their wives to come to faith too
- permanent solutions for my disappearing water & satellite modem problems
- a weekly supply of city water (my neighbors are getting it, but I'm not)
- an end to the frequent sexual harassment by the men in town
- a smooth transition for me and the Sano family as they move away for about 6 weeks to be part of a large evangelism project in another town & God's blessing on the project
- safety and health for Eliza (Sano) and the baby who may arrive while they are away
- continued peace in Guinea: students are protesting today because the government hasn't paid their teachers, so teachers haven't showed up yet for classes, which should have started over a week ago.

God's rich and abundant blessings to you,

Andrea

"I have but one candle of life to burn, and I would rather burn it out in a land filled with darkness than in a land flooded with light."

John Keith Falconer