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Amina





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***Meet Amina:**



I first noticed her at our morning chapel service at Heal Africa ... or rather, she first noticed me. As the service was starting and the 300 patients and staff scurried in to find seats in the chapel, Amina, who was alone, dashed between their legs, found me, and snuggled into my plastic chair. Little Amina, only 3, seemed to think I needed a friend. This went on for several days.

I work at the school for vulnerable children at Heal Africa Hospital, and later asked the medical staff about Amina. They told me that she had accompanied an adult who needed long-term care and was thus an *interne* at the hospital living amongst the patients until the person she was with, her grandmother Ruth, was discharged.

***Meet Ruth, Amina's grandmother:**

(who told me the rest of the story)



Little Amina's mother abandoned her when she was only a year old, after her husband abandoned them both. I took Amina in and we get by on the little I make. I work as a commerçant (vendor) selling handmade charcoal cook stoves that I buy in the city and take back to our village to sell.

Two months ago I was traveling home on top of a transport truck with my sack of small charcoal stoves when the truck had an accident and flipped over. I injured my leg badly. They ended up taking me to Heal Africa with Amina (as there was no one at home to care for her). When I arrived at Heal the doctors could not save my leg, so as my granddaughter sat outside the operating theater, they amputated it and then she came with me to the ward where we now share a bed.

As long as her grandmother is interned, little Amina has her run of the hospital campus; that is how we met at the chapel, next to the Tuungane school, just past the extended-care ward where Ruth sits outside her hospital room and greets me every day.

Ruth told me a few weeks ago that she was anxious and concerned about the future. Because of her disability, she is afraid she will no longer be able to provide for herself or Amina when they return to their village and wondered how she will manage. It is clear that they will face immense challenges; Amina's grandmother will have a difficult time getting around the village using a walker on the rocky volcanic terrain, much less make an income when she is discharged.

We started a knitting program a few months ago (with gifts from American Baptist Women and others) for some of the victims of sexual violence who participate in a counseling program at Heal Africa. I asked Beatrice, my Congolese friend who teaches them knitting if she would also teach Ruth to crochet. That was last week. Ruth has taken the challenge to heart; she is not only a quick learner, but has already made small purses that she hangs on her walker so passersby can see and purchase. She is starting to make enough money to feed herself and Amina ... and has learned a new skill to take back to her village!



I am reminded of the song “Dream Small” by Josh Wilson:

***But dream small
Don't buy the lie you've gotta do it all
Just let Jesus use you where you are
One day at a time
Live well
Loving God and others as yourself
Find little ways where only you can help
With His great love***

***These simple moments change the world
Of course there's nothing wrong with bigger dreams
Just don't miss the minutes on your way,
your bigger things
'Cause these simple moments change the world***

No matter where Bill and I have lived or served over these past 26 years, God puts people in our path with seemingly impossible problems to solve. Often, we throw up our hands and ask how we can ever make a difference? We should, however, never overlook the opportunities that God presents to us, or the nudging of the Spirit that compels us to step out and try.

Amina reminds me that even small acts of kindness can make a difference. God used little Amina, who squirmed into my chair during a weekly chapel service, to bring blessing to her grandmother. I pray that I always remain open to the leading of the Spirit who allows us to be instruments of peace and bring joy and blessings to those who need it most.