

How These 8 Missionaries Are Obeying God—And Saving Thousands of Lives

I sit in my grey-walled cubicle, reduced to tears as I stare into the face on my screen.

When I got the email from my boss giving me brief instructions about the latest project I was pulled onto, I didn't think about it too much: Missionary doctors in Africa, Giving Tuesday campaign, video footage and images for me to review.

I've been to Africa. I've driven across the rocky pathways that make traveling four miles take almost an hour. I've watched field fires burn in the night and seen our headlights dimmed by dust and smoke. I've seen the dirty blistered toes of barefoot children, the painfully thin shoulders and unquenchable resilience in their eyes. I've cradled abandoned babies and cried while they slept in my arms. I know the pain. I know the poverty. I've seen it.

Besides that, I work for a nonprofit. I see videos and photos of third-world countries day in and day out. So, it shouldn't be anything new to me. I shouldn't be crying right now, smearing mascara on my cheek and hoping nobody comes into my cube for an impromptu meeting. But I am.

Something about this project and this picture strikes a nerve deep in my soul. A nerve I've purposefully numbed.

Almost three years ago, my family was in the process of adopting a baby from Zambia named Joy, when a series of serious complications left her in a rusty hospital bed shared with other sickly children in a rural corner of Zambia. Several weeks of frantic, desperate planning and paperwork to get her to South Africa for treatment came to an abrupt halt

when she died after an invasive surgery.

And for a moment the world stopped.

And then it started moving again. I forced it to move. And I forced myself to stop crying. And I cauterized my soul with a busy calendar and blinked back tears. I don't understand God's timing. I don't understand why He doesn't always bring the healing we beg Him for.

And here I was now, in my cubicle, with a flood of unbidden memories crowding my head. I had eventually found some healing after Joy's death, but still there is a part of my heart that will never quite be whole. As I scrolled through the pictures on my screen, tiny babies crowded in makeshift wooden incubators, a father holding his severely malnourished child, her eyes too big for her face, a little boy grinning from a bed his leg in a cast and then the photo that brings me to tears: a burn victim, maybe 10 or 12, with a mottled hollow where his eye should have been.

Dear God, I think, I will do anything for this project to make sure that kids like this get help, to make sure that other babies like sweet baby Joy do not die from lack of adequate medical care. So, I dive in and learn as much as I can about African Mission Healthcare Foundation and its founders and the doctors whose life-work they support.

In rural Africa, there is only one surgeon to every 2.5 million people. And more than 56 million men, women and children in Africa need surgery right now. Today. Those kinds of statistics are staggering and can feel overwhelming.

How much can eight doctors really do?

Let me introduce you to some of my heroes, and then you tell me. There's Dr. Fader, a Michigan native who moved with his family, to one of the world's poorest countries and has saved tens of thousands of lives. There's Dr. Ter Haar, a man who

has dedicated two decades of his life to serving at a mission hospital and has cut maternal mortality rates by 75 percent. There's Dr. Hansen, who moved his wife and four children to a remote part of Africa to teach the next generation of Kenya doctors the art of pediatric surgery. And their colleagues, who continue to save lives and train the next generation of local medical staff.

After a couple of months, I met Dr. Jon Fielder. I wasn't sure what he would be like, this man I admired so deeply. And if you saw him in a crowd, I don't think you'd ever pick him out for a hero. He's average height, maybe a little shorter, with thick frameless glasses and faint creases around his eyes—the tell-tale sign of having seen more than his fair share of suffering. But take a look at his hands. These hands have brought life and hope and healing to thousands of people.

Even though it's late and he is tired from a long day of travel and multiple interviews, he sits and tells the stories of his work and the work of his colleagues. As I listen to him, I get the feeling that even if it was his last breath, he would gently tell the world about the people he serves, not demanding, but hoping, that they will catch a glimpse of the future he sees. A future where women, swollen with child, can get the C-section they so desperately need. A future where solar-powered electricity will make it possible for doctors to have reliable power while they're operating. A future where the next generation of local medical staff can get the training and housing and experience they need to serve their countrymen.

And as he talks, I listen. I listen to a man who has given his life and traded the financial security of a talented surgeon's comfortable career in the United States for an uncertain future helping the overlooked and underprivileged in the third world. The kind of hero sitting across the table from me isn't flashy; he doesn't ask for attention; he doesn't need applause.

But he does need support: he needs a faithful band of heroes helping heroes save lives.

Rabbi Erica and Mark Gerson, Jewish philanthropists and co-founders of AMHF, offered a \$1 million-dollar challenge grant to the Christian Broadcasting Network to raise funds for these eight doctors and mission hospitals across Africa. And that is where my part of story intersects with the greater story God is telling through the service and sacrifice of these doctors.

God brought it full circle. I'm not sure I'll ever understand why He didn't heal baby Joy or why she didn't have a little more time so we could get through the bureaucratic maze to a decent hospital with modern facilities. But I do know that He is faithful. And the pain birthed in me at the moment of her passing has turned into passion.

And there is no better way to honor her, than helping to make sure other precious children do not face the same tragedy. Will you be a hero and help a hero today? You can learn more about CBN's partnership with AMHF [here](#). When you give, 100 percent of your gift goes directly to the field, and your gift is matched so the impact of your generosity is doubled.