

Kolenda's Nations Church Adopts Ministry to Show Jesus' Love to Underprivileged Children

Patricia Morris was part of a small group at her Texas church in 2009 when they started discussing how they could serve their community better. The group suggested helping the homeless shelters in the area by giving them supplies for kids to have a birthday party.

That small suggestion caused Morris to have a flashback to her own childhood birthday parties and how special they made her feel. Even though her parents were divorced and her father lived in another city, Patricia's birthday was a big deal and brought the family back together.

Morris said she felt loved, celebrated and seen.

In that moment, Morris explained, "God just impressed in my heart, 'That is how I want these kids that are in these hopeless situations, to feel ... That they are seen, that they're loved, that I celebrate them and that I have plans for their lives.'" So that passion got burned in me and I contacted the homeless shelter, they said, 'Yes, we would love for you to throw birthday parties for our kids.' That's how Birthday Blessing got started."

Since the inception of "Birthday Blessing" the ministry has hosted over 1,000 parties for underprivileged children, demonstrating that their lives really do matter, to the local church that helped sponsor their party, and especially to Jesus.

Morris vividly remembers the very first Birthday Blessing

party for a boy named Mason who was living in the homeless shelter. He was ecstatic he was going to have his party with his friends at "Peter Piper Pizza," an nearby, exciting place for kids to have parties.

Morris is purposeful to communicate that "Jesus loves you. He celebrates you, and He wants you to have an awesome birthday party." So, on all the presents, the tags say "From Jesus", making sure that the kids know who is REALLY throwing their party.

As Mason opened up his last gift on that first Birthday Blessing party, he spontaneously threw up his hands and said "Thank you, God!"

The emotional Morris reminisced that she knew that this party was connecting Mason to Jesus.

The Gospel is presented to the families and friends of the "Kid of Honor" and they are invited to the church as well.

Morris explained that Mason's family went from homeless to homeowners and even went on to celebrating other kids themselves!

The ministry of "Birthday Blessing" has been featured on local news and even nationally to Good Morning America. In 2010 Birthday Blessing started internationally in Brazil.

Morris has since moved to Orlando, Florida and is believing for churches to latch on to the vision of celebrating that Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world. On Sunday October 17, her new home church, Nations Church Orlando, officially adopted and publicly celebrated this ministry.

"I got to share with Pastor Daniel Kolenda and the rest of the leadership of Nations Church, about this ministry that the Lord had given me, and they loved it," Morris says. "They

caught the vision, and they embrace it! The leadership said, 'We want this inside of our church. We want to adopt Birthday Blessing as an outreach ministry so that we can share the extravagant love of Jesus with all the children of in Orlando, Florida.'"

Morris has a vision to see 1 million children blessed and have churches all around the world connect with this model of celebrating underprivileged children, being a light to their families and seeing a generation changed through the greatest birthday gift of all, Jesus Christ. {eoa}

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