

Freely Give by Kelsey Williams



I recently spent two weeks in Uganda, Africa on a mission trip. Being my third trip to Africa, I have seen more poverty than I imagined existed in this century. I have watched women bake rolls in an underground oven lined with handmade bricks. I have also had the humbling privilege of helping place brand new Bibles in the hands of nearly 200 Africans. Before we gifted the Bibles during my latest trip, my team leader asked if any of them already had

a Bible of their own and, out of forty kids, only two raised their hand. When they bowed to thank us, their knees nearly touched the ground.

Humbled. Privileged. Blessed.

These words have shaped my life since my first trip to Africa. My heart aches and my eyes burn with tears even as I write this. Even so, pity is not in their vocabulary. They are a strong, beautiful people who trust the Lord to provide for their needs even in the midst of their trials and hardships, like maybe getting one meal a day. They believe fully in God's faithfulness even as they watch their parents, siblings, and friends die of AIDS and other diseases. God has shown me many new facets of His love through these orphans. They have shown me how to love freely and unconditionally under the conditions of losing loved ones and suffering from many broken hearts. These children hold nothing back from each other. They share every material possession that they have to the point that you truly do not know to whom it belongs. They surround each other in such a way that you would think they are *all* brothers and

sisters.

Loving Hearts

Something the Lord revealed to me through their love for each other is how much more closed off I become to people with each scar a person leaves on my heart. I quit giving freely because I want to protect myself. These orphans *expect* to lose the people they love but I have never seen it hinder the way they surround each other and continue to give freely from their heart in spite of the hurt to come. The Lord has been whispering to my soul, "I am your strength and defense (Psalm 118:14). You have nothing to fear (John 14:27) for fear cannot coexist with love (1John 4:18). Now give My love freely (Matt. 10:18)." This calls for a complete shift in my own actions as Jesus said His disciples would be known by *love*. And Jesus' example of love was not cheap or convenient; it was costly and sacrificial.



During my time in Uganda this past August, the Lord showed me how He is a Father to the fatherless and His heart is for such as these. Satan, from the very beginning, has been trying to destroy God's family, and he's trying especially hard with the AIDs pandemic in Africa. Praise God that the story doesn't end there, though, and we have hope for us and hope to offer the orphans. God has defeated Satan and is gathering His family together as a mother hen gathers her chicks. John 14:18 says, "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."

God's Heartbeat

There is so much that God revealed to me during those weeks about myself, about people, and about my passion for Africa but I consider the most precious what He revealed about Himself. The first morning in Uganda, He gave me an image of me sitting in His lap with my head against His chest, listening to His heartbeat. Generally we, as people, don't lay our heads on just any random chest but only on the chest of someone we love and feel deeply connected to and intimate with. I knew He was telling me that, unless I was that close to Him, I would never hear His heartbeat. It is not until we're able to hear His heartbeat that we'll know what it beats FOR. Since then, I've also realized He's trying to give me a heart transplant. It is an incredibly painful process that requires sacrifice and denial of self but a beautiful, genuine love is the outcome that can only take root in the fertile soil of God's heart in me. This is only the beginning of a



lifelong process, but I will consider the goal attained if He never stops breaking me apart and transforming me to be more like Him in all things. For it is in the places I feel the most broken apart that I feel the most alive in Him.

Rivers of Life

Our heavenly Father yearns for us to curl up in His lap and listen to His heartbeat. He has made us to be bearers of His love and Jeremiah 31:3 says He has drawn us with love, and He wants to continue to bring us to Him through each other. There is a dried up riverbed inside of many of us because we have built a dam, hindering the water flow. At our request, the Lord is prepared to demolish the dam and allow His waters of

love to gush forth, up and out of us. He then nourishes our heart with His love; it flows freely into us and freely out as we begin to feel His heart beat. We have the humbling privilege and blessing of *knowing* what His heart beats for; we need only to start asking and listening.

Today's guest post was written by Kelsey Williams, a college student studying nursing. She says, "The Lord has laid it on my heart to bring nursing skills into international missions and words cannot describe how passionate I have become about this calling on my life. In the mean time, I enjoy getting to know new people and letting them know how dearly they are loved by their Father in heaven. I also enjoy talking to people about my experiences in Africa and recruiting them to come with me."