
❖ Restoration Village ❖

September 2011

“Blessed are those who mourn. What can it mean? One can understand, why Jesus hails those who hunger and thirst for righteous, why he hails the merciful, why he hails the pure in heart, why he hails the peacemakers, why he hails those who endure under persecution. These are qualities of character which belong to the life of the kingdom. But why does he hail the mourners of the world?”

WHY CHEER TEARS?¹

Eight year old Zahra Baker moved to Hickory, North Carolina in the fall of 2008. The smiley, freckly-faced girl had lost her left leg to bone cancer and the chemotherapy caused her to lose most of her ability to hear. She moved around a lot while in North Carolina and neighbors said that the step mother frequently marched the little girl with the prosthetic leg “up and down the hill while hitting and cursing her.” Some of her school teachers even visited her at home after she came to school one day with a black eye, but that was all the school will admit. The Department of Social Services visited the home on four occasions, and called Zahra’s situation an injurious environment, but no action was taken. Forty nine days after the last DSS visit, Zahra Baker’s dismembered body was discovered spread around the area in Granite Falls, North Carolina. Her step mother goes to trial in September of this year. Each night, Zahra had to read a sign above her bed that read, “Love, Laugh, Live.”

There had been multiple reports, there were many people who knew, and now she is dead. Where are the tears for Zahra Baker? ²

Among the physical and psychological consequences of childhood trauma are: depression, anxiety, chronic and acute somatizing, feelings of isolation and alienation, negative self image, mental illness, attention deficit disorder, extreme dependency, impaired ability to trust others, suicide attempts, substance abuse, among other manifestations. Therapists tell me that the majority of childhood survivors have damaged ability to develop trusting, intimate relationships with others and with God especially. Anger, shame, and feelings of distance toward God are prevalent in far greater percentages than non-abused women. Simon Weil writes that God’s grace does not have the power to “cure the irremediably wounded nature here below.”³ Severe trauma to a child (for this paragraph think of those dear children starving in Africa now) that is destroying their sense of self-protection, personal invulnerability, and safety in a world that has lost all predictability. Where are the tears for those in the traumas of today?

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Recent news stories about Jaycee Dugard who was kidnapped at age 11 and kept as a sex slave in a hidden suburban compound in California for 18 years is a fresh example. Did you see any of the television stories of her life in captivity? There were neighbors who reported something strange in the captor's back yard. Sheriff's deputies visited the home and reported nothing strange. Parole officers came to visit her captor, a registered sex offender, and did not even go out in the back yard to look around. Dugard gave birth to two daughters, the first at age 14, with no medical assistance, and for 15 more years despite the visit by others there was no freedom for Jaycee and her two daughters. Does that story bother you? Are there tears at all?

Most of us have not heard of Kate and Will Stillman of Denver, Colorado. There is no book out, no movie plans, no national television story (that I know of) and yet, their story is another of great courage, resilience, and how the twin brother and sister eventually got justice. Their parents had been in and out of shelters and one day their mother left them with some neighbors and the story turns for the worst. The abuse, the torture, the beatings, is too sordid to just write about in this newsletter. Kristen had four children by her captor during junior high and high school. Neighbors often called the police and social services, the house was visited, but nothing happened to really investigate the plight of the children. When the police or social services did show up at the house to investigate, the interview was done in the home and the perpetrators did all the talking and answering the questions for the children. For the record, the Denver Department of Human Services reported that there have been improvements in the process in recent years for interviewing but declined to discuss this specific incident with the author of their story. Kristen was in the hospital having her fourth child of the captor when she was told what he was doing to one of her other children. That is when she and her brother Will went to the Denver police and a Detective believed their story. The perpetrator received 300 years in prison and the man's wife is serving 16 years in prison. Kristen knew that she was unable to care for her children and gave all four up for adoption last year. She is now in college, her brother Will is a housepainter and they live close to each in the Denver area. Kristen says of her years in the sordid, abusive situation, that "Only a deaf, dumb, blind person would not have noticed we needed help. Maybe "I am being abused" didn't come out of my mouth, but I was speaking in code. I gave everyone hints."⁴

In a world where it seems that the children are always the first to suffer makes the vision of Isaiah the prophet who foretells of the new world where "No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days" (Isaiah 65:20) seems like a disillusioned false prophet.

Lisa Lampman writes: "The Church is, unfortunately, little different from society in its perspectives. If society is enthralled with evil and power, in a sense, the Church is as well. We don't like to hear the stories of the wounded. We recoil from dealing with wounded hearts, their struggles and questions. We want to deal with power. And until **we, as a church, get back to healing and ministering to the wounded, we are not a church**" (emphasis mine).⁵

At the beginning of this newsletter is the question, "Why Cheer Tears?" Wolterstorff answered the question in one paragraph: "It must be that mourning is also a quality of character that belongs to the life of his realm. Who then are the mourners? The mourners are those who have caught a glimpse of God's new day, who ache with all their being for the day's coming, and who break out into tears when confronted with its absence... The mourners are aching visionaries."

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Village News

Years ago I wrote of the death of a five year old little boy (a story that happened long before there was a Restoration Village). I was sitting in a waiting room when I read the story of the hours of the beating the little boy suffered prior to his death. I read that "...relatives, school teachers and social workers knew of the past abuse and the potential of the mother's abusive behavior, but they did nothing..." and I wept. That story is still vivid in my mind, a story I read in an Atlanta, Georgia doctor's office. That was 15 years before there was a Restoration Village. I still weep at the stories.

Do you ache when you hear the stories? Do you weep? Compassion and sympathy are not the same thing. A compassionate Christian is committed to using their resources to meet needs. Be an aching visionary.

David Engle

¹*Lament for a Son*, Nicholas Wolterstorff, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Mi., 1989.

²*Zahra Baker*, information gathered by using "Google".

³*Waiting for God*, Simon Weil, Putnam, New York, 1951, pgs 119-120.

⁴*Glamour Magazine*, August 2011, "We Were Prisoners in a House of Torture, but We Survived."

⁵*God and the Victim, Theological Reflection in Evil, Victimization, Justice and Forgiveness*, Lisa Lampman, Ed., Eerdmans, 1999, Grand Rapids, Mi., pg 33.

We had some visitors in August from U.S. Congressman Steve Womack's office to the Children's Advocacy Center. Chad Hall, from Washington, D.C. who handles as a part of his many duties, children's issues, along with Jeff Thacker and Pam Forester of the Arkansas District office meet with Beverly during their afternoon tour of the center.



The Village will have the first baby born in a long time about the time you receive the newsletter. We will post a picture on the web: restorationvillage.net as soon as it happens and in next month's newsletter.

IN ACCORDANCE with the law and because we don't mind at all, an audit of Restoration Ministries, Inc. d.b.a. Restoration Village is performed by an outside auditor each year. A copy of this Audit is available for public viewing at our principal office from the hours of 8:30 a.m. till 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. We would be honored to send a copy to any that request the same, but suggest you send us a few dollars for the printing and postage. The 990 form is filed each year with the I.R.S. and the Attorney General of the State of Arkansas.

SCHOOL HAS STARTED and we are thinking towards the fall and winter months. Fall festival for our mummies, babies and former residents in October; Thanksgiving and Christmas are right around the corner. Junior League will begin their monthly teaching and training programs with us in September and Beverly will begin Wednesday night groups on September 7th. We diligently strive to establish traditions that will be memorable and exciting activities for the children and their parent here at the Village. Despite the economy, despite any obstacle, the programs will continue and we welcome the opportunities for these events.

Beverly has been my bride for 48 years on September 1st. We have five children, 15 grandchildren, lived in 5 different cities, and 4 different states. Twenty two of those years have been in Little Flock, Arkansas at Restoration Village and the Children's Advocacy Center. It has been a wild adventure of faith, heart ache, challenges, opportunities, some experiences that can only be explained as miracles, in sickness and health, continued maturing in love for each other, and all she still says is: "I wanted to be a stay at home mom that bakes chocolate chip cookies" for the kids and grandkids. Over the years I have come to realize that service to God and she is that example, is first of all a possession of courage to leave "not knowing" to strange places. We both have served with deference in that we have learned and listened to the hearts and souls of the people we are trying to help and they have been our best teachers. We have experienced that an essential ingredient to serving those in a crisis time of their life - it is a thankless role and yet, we keep serving (and when thanksgiving is offered, we pass it to you for contributing to the Village). The no contingent commitment to you and to the precious people who arrive at the Village has allowed the visitors to see continuity and stability as an example. We didn't just commit to a "mission trip" – we stayed. This is the place God wanted us to be. Our gratitude is to you who have shared in the opportunity for others to choose a new life, a second chance, when allowed to be in a habitat of security, encouragement, and direct services.

I am writing this mini editorial because(I have no desire to give the references as I prefer that you just know that it is coming and true) there are writers that are saying that humanitarian work outside of the local church is diminishing the gospel and should be discouraged from continuing. There are organizations that have Christian labels that are deeply entwined in lobbying for more government intervention in charitable works because the church and parachurch organizations do not have the resources to meet the needs. Last month one of the great men of modern Christianity died, John Stott of England. He led with humility and passion and his books will continue to influence thousands, just as they did me. John in a 2006 interview said: "We cannot perfect society. But we can improve it. My hope is that in the future, evangelical leaders will ensure that their social agenda includes such vital but controversial topics as halting climate change, eradicating poverty, abolishing armories of mass destruction, responding adequately to the AIDS pandemic, and asserting the human rights of women and children in all cultures. I hope our agenda does not remain too narrow." Thanks John Stott for a life well lived, see you again someday.

I remember reading of when the security police came and surrounded St. George's Cathedral in Cape Town in anticipation that they could arrest Desmond Tutu and other parishioners for political comments that Tutu said: "You are powerful, very powerful. But I serve a God who will not be mocked. Since you have already lost, I invite you to come join the winning side." The church jumped to their feet, praised the Lord and danced out of the Cathedral to meet the awaiting police. The police did not know what to do and backed up, opened a space in the streets and let the believers dance in the streets of South Africa.

I invite you to keep dancing in the streets for the faith in the coming months. As long we dance together, lives will be changed.

Beverly holding the Koala bear when we were on Hamilton Island in Australia this past summer. It is too good of a picture not to share it with you.

