

Sharing a blessing!

March 2024



In September of 2023, our church family here at Rising Sun packed 22,000 meals with Lifeline Christian Mission to be distributed to those who suffer from physical hunger. We celebrated that blessing during our missions emphasis weekend. As I talked with Kristy Steppe, who was their Mobile Meal Pack Administrator at the time, she asked me a “random” question. “Would you be interested in going on a mission’s trip to South Africa?” My immediate response was, “Yes, I would”. I postponed my knee replacement surgery and got a passport instead. It ended up that my daughter, Julia, and Roger Howard and his daughter, Eavan, were able to go as well. God has called Kristy Steppe to become a servant partner with Lydia’s Mission in South Africa, and He used Kristy to help God teach me some valuable lessons about giving, missions, and how to be a better servant - sharing a blessing in life.

We all tend to want to help others in the ways we feel most comfortable helping, even if that isn’t the best way to really help them. In the United States, people tend to have everything and appreciate nothing. We have created an attitude of entitlement and dependency. The apostle Paul wrote in **2 Thessalonians 3: 10-13** **For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies.** Robert Lupton wrote a very interesting book entitled *Toxic Charity* in which he talks about how we should never do for the poor what they can do for themselves, about limiting one-way giving to emergencies; instead, empower the poor through employment, lending, and investing, using grants sparingly to reinforce achievements, subordinate self-interest to the needs of those being served, and we should listen closely to those we seek to help, and in particular listen to what is NOT said, but apparently felt (**Proverbs 30:15**); and above all, do no harm! There is an important dignity and worth in work (**Genesis 3:19, 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12**) - in doing what you can for yourself with God’s help and being able to contribute or give in life (**2 Corinthians 9:6-15**). Even a poor widow understood the blessings of a servant’s heart and giving back to God (**Luke 21:1-4**). Christ’s whole purpose in coming to earth was to give eternal life and value, forgiveness and worth to us all (**Hebrews 12:1-3, Matthew 10:40-42**). Helping people grow a servant’s heart to help themselves and others is a far greater gift than just giving a handout of dependency or an attitude of entitlement.

It is important as servants of God, that we serve and care for each other’s physical needs in a way that leads them to their greatest need of a Savior. Lupton also argues in his book that one-way charity has the following ever-descending life cycle: Give once and you elicit appreciation; Give twice and you create anticipation; Give three times and you create expectation; Give four times and it becomes entitlement; Give five times and you establish dependency. In the US, for most people, dependency is focused on the government instead of God. (**Matthew 22:37-40, Proverbs 3:5-6, John 14:6, 2 Cor. 12:9-10, John 6:26-35, Psa. 18:2, 121:1-2, Isaiah 41:13, Jeremiah 17:5**) God is the source and sustainer of our lives and we must depend on Him for physical and spiritual sustenance and life. As we serve and help others in need, we must always turn their eyes to their true source of help and greatest need in life.

Lydia’s Mission is located in eManzana, formerly known as Badplaas, in the Albert Luthuli Local Municipality, in the Gert Sibande District Municipality in the province of Mpumalanga, South Africa

and shares its eastern border with the country of Eswatini. South Africa is an impoverished country: Clean drinking water piped inside a dwelling is available to only 47% of the population; it has a poverty rate of 63%. It has an estimated 71.1% teen pregnancy rate, with a 24/1000 infant mortality rate. Only 7.4% of the population over 20 has completed some primary school, and its unemployment rate is 32.6%, with estimates significantly higher for women. The unemployment in Badplass district is topping 60%. For those with jobs, the average monthly wage is \$75. Unlike the US, South Africa is a country which overall has little or nothing, so unlike in the US, they appreciate anything. Claire Brown has had a heart for missions for as long as she can remember, and now, at the ripe old age of 33 years, she has been serving through Lydia's Mission in South Africa for the past 10 years.

This ministry has been blessed with a 70-acre farm with several buildings on the property. They utilize the facility in ministry as a source of income, food, and employment for those they serve. They have over an acre of gardens, half an acre of greenhouse tunnels, a thousand chickens and a sewing center. Most of the women who are employed on the farm previously worked at the garbage dump where they would dig through garbage every day, morning to night, for anything that could be recycled for a few pennies - to buy a loaf of bread to help feed their families. Clair holds a weekly Bible study at the dump with an average of forty women each week. Eyes and ears are being opened to Christ's love and forgiveness: 80 women have been baptized in the Lord. The mission has established nine Hope Centers in the area which provide around 1190 children with one hot meal a day, after school, five days a week. The meals are served with love and God's word, to give hope for a better life with Christ. They have two "Gogo" Centers where around 100 Gogo girls (Grandmas in their language), seniors previously forgotten and often discarded without community or care, receive a light breakfast and lunch each day and medical treatment and referrals when needed. More than just food to nourish their bodies, their souls are nourished daily with scripture, fellowship, praise, and devotionals to encourage and grow their relationship with Christ and each other (**Hebrews 10:19-25**).

We celebrated being able to pack 22,000 meals in one Saturday for hungry people last fall. Lydia's Mission provides 27,800 meals a month for hungry children and the elderly. It costs a little over \$13,000 each month to do so, which is a lot. But when you figure each child gets 20 meals per month, and far more than just food; they also get holistic child development at a hope center in partnership with a local church, medical screenings, education tutors, social and emotional interactions and the word of God at Bible clubs, for only \$10 a month (the cost of one McDonald's combo meal here); it is amazing. Every meal is received with a grateful heart, and even more important, it's given in the name of Jesus. **Matthew 25:40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me.** Please take a few minutes and look up <https://lydiasmission.org/> Lydia's Mission in South Africa and learn more. Prayerfully consider how you might share with those in need (**Romans 12:13, 2 Corinthians 9:12, Eph 4:11-16**). Lydia's Mission is a worthy of our prayers and support. If you want to support this great work, one child or one senior each month (\$10 or \$12 respectively), you can give now at lydiasmission.org/donate. If you have questions, Roger and I would be more than happy to talk with you about them at any time.

~Gary~

