

First Timothy: The Household of God

The Gospel and Materialism – Part 2

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October 16, 2011



THE GOSPEL AND MATERIALISM – PART 2 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I invite you to turn with me to 1 Timothy 6. We'll start in verse 6, and then we'll work our way to verses 17 through 19. Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, economics professors at Covenant College, have written an excellent book called *When Helping Hurts*, addressing how to help the poor in the healthiest ways, and they start in the beginning of their book by writing these words:

"The Bible's teachings should cut to the heart of North American Christians. By any measure, we are the richest people ever to walk on planet earth. Furthermore, at no time in history has there ever been greater economic disparity in the world than at the present. While the average American lives on more than 90 dollars per day, approximately one billion people live on less than one dollar per day. And 2.6 billion (40 percent of the world's population) live on less than two dollars per day."

In their conclusion, they ask, "What is the task of the church then?" Their answer is,

"We are to embody Jesus Christ by doing what He did and what He continues to do through us. Declare, using both words and deeds, that Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of lords Who is bringing in a kingdom of righteousness, justice, and peace. And the church needs to do this where Jesus did this—among the blind, the lame, the sick and the outcasts and the poor."

Physical Poverty in the World...

The people...

If you were not here last week, or if you're visiting with us tonight, I'm going to bring you up to speed on what we were talking about. We were talking about physical poverty in the world. I want to give a little bit of specific definition to that tonight. So, consider the people...over one billion people...living and dying in desperate poverty on less than one dollar per day. Over one billion! In that billion, you have hundreds of millions in slums...urban pockets lined with hundreds of thousands of people crammed into small shacks and shanties.

I think about the Dharavi slum in Mumbai, India, where I was not that long ago. Over a million people living in an area about half the size of Brook Highland subdivision. A million people, half the size of the subdivision right next to this church campus. Out of that million, about one fifth of them have HIV/AIDS, and about 100,000 of them are street children...hundreds of millions in slums, hundreds of millions starving. We say, "I'm starving for some food!" No, you are not, but hundreds of millions of people are. Millions of children are exploited. Children are often the silent victims of poverty...exploited, used, abused and

discarded. Millions of children are orphaned in all kinds of settings due to all kinds of circumstances. These are not just numbers. These are people! Individuals; men, women, kids...like us.

The poverty...

This is a picture of physical, material poverty. This doesn't even touch deeper levels of poverty on an emotional, psychological, relational and even on deeper personal levels...just a physical, surface picture of poverty. What it means for them to be materially impoverished means to have a lack of food and water. There are over one billion people on the planet today who do not have access to safe drinking water. They have a lack of education. There are massive illiteracy rates in countries all across Africa and in countries like India. There is inadequate medical care for some of the most basic illnesses. I'm not talking about high-level surgeries. I'm talking about treatment for stomach problems that cause people to die; we would just take an over-the-counter pill for, and it would be gone in a few hours.

Brain damage...one of the most devastating pictures of poverty in the world is permanent brain damage caused by protein deficiency. In the first two years of life, 80 percent of brain development happens. If someone does not have sufficient protein for that time, then he or she will pay for it the rest of his or her life with a malformed brain. Preventable disease; there is disease like HIV/AIDS that is spreading like wildfire in ways that could be prevented. There are also easily curable diseases and sicknesses.

This is reality. If you allow yourself to really think about it, it will overwhelm you. Just in case you haven't noticed, we have now officially moved from superficial things like football games on Saturday that do not matter to things that really matter. We've just gone from things that our affections are so tied up in, to things that our affections need to be tied up in. It's deafening when you think about it. When you realize that the God we worship in this room said in Deuteronomy 15 that among His people there should be no poor; the God who gives us a picture in Acts 2 and Acts 4 of a community where there was no needy person among them; a God who brought His people together all throughout the New Testament to bring relief to those who were in the middle of famine; a God who, from cover to cover in this Word, shows us that He wants His glory and His grace and His mercy known among those who are most needy in the world.

Material Riches in the Church

This is the God we worship, which then leads us to understand material riches in the church. God says in 1 Timothy 6:6-10,

"But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs."

The path to great gain...

Let's review here what God is saying to us in 1 Timothy 6. The path to great gain is contentment. Be content with having necessities..."*food and clothing*," Paul says...having the necessities of life covered. Christians can and ought to be content with the simple

necessities of life. Are you content with that? Really, brothers and sisters in Birmingham, are you content with simple necessities? The Bible tells us to be content with having necessities and be cautious with acquiring excess. Be very, very cautious! Paul says the desire for more is dangerous and ridiculous. So, materialism is not just damning, but materialism is dumb.

Think about it. What does materialism do? You will take none of it with you! Paul says, "*We brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world.*" There are no U-Hauls behind hearses. You will take none of it with you. It will take contentment from you. The more you acquire, and the more you convince yourself that you need it, the more you want to have it, and your acquiring ends up robbing your soul of contentment in your God!

You'll take none of it with you, it will take contentment from you, and you will miss God's purpose for you. What if God has made us the richest people to ever walk on planet Earth for a reason other than more indulgence for us? What if God has actually given us this for His greatness to be known among all peoples? There are thousands of people groups that haven't even heard the gospel. What is more in line with God's purpose for you? Giving the gospel to them or buying a second home? We'll come back to that.

The path to total ruin...

That's the path to great gain. Not just gain, but great gain. Great gain! Be content with having necessities. The Bible says to be cautious with acquiring excess. Why be cautious? Because this is the path to total ruin. Paul addresses two things in verses 9 and 10. In verse 10, it's the love of money, and in verse 9, it's the desire for riches. It's really two ways of saying the same thing, and he says that both lead to a life of self-destruction. Materialism plunges you into ruin and destruction. See this! God is giving us here a warning for our good! Know it goes against every other message you're getting in this culture, but He's telling us this for our good! Let's believe Him! It leads to self-destruction and a life of self-mutilation. The language of verse 10 is startling! "*Pierced themselves with many pangs.*" Run from materialism. Run from the snare that is everywhere in suburban Birmingham. Run from it! It's a path that leads to total eternal ruin.

You say, "What should we do with our riches then?" I am glad you asked. In verses 17-19 God says,

"As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life."

The plan for rich people...

The plan for rich people: to all who have riches, i.e. to us, flee self-confidence. Verse 17 says, "*...charge them not to be haughty.*" Possessions produce pride. Mark it down. Possessions produce pride. We think, "No they don't!" We think that because we're proud! We think, "I'm okay because I have stuff. I'm secure because I have stuff." Now, we would not say, "My security is in my stuff," but if someone starts telling us to give our stuff away to the nations, our insecurities will rise to the top very, very quickly.

Flee self-confidence and flee self-centeredness. Do not put your hope on the uncertainty of riches! Riches cause you to put your hope in yourself and what you obtain. You start to

think, "I'm okay. Look what I can acquire and do." No! That kind of thinking will kill you, and it will kill others because you will acquire more and more and more and pour your resources into yourself instead of the glory of Christ being made known to the ends of the earth. So, flee self-confidence and self-centeredness, and instead, put your hope...your focus...on God. In other words, 1 Timothy 6 is urging us to delight in the Giver, not in the gifts!

Set your heart and mind on the Giver! Not more gifts! Focus on God! He gives good things for our enjoyment. This is key in verse 17. Things in and of themselves are not bad. They are good gifts from God to be enjoyed, and as good gifts, we are to do good things with them. "*To be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share.*" We give good things for others' enjoyment. Be rich in giving! The biblical antidote to materialism is extravagant, sacrificial giving. So, give good things for others' enjoyment, and in the process, you will invest good things in ours and others' eternity...in giving, not in hoarding; in sacrificing, not in indulging. We store up treasure for ourselves as a good foundation for the future, so that we may take hold of that which is truly life. So that is an explanation of this Word.

An Illustration...

Now, here is an illustration of this Word, an illustration...not the only illustration. This Word is intended to come to life in each of our circumstances in wonderfully creative ways according to the design of God, but tonight, I want to introduce you to one picture of 1 Timothy 6 in action.

I first heard about Katie Davis when we as a church were walking through the *Radical* sermon series. Looking at tough but true and all-satisfying words from Jesus in the Gospels beckoned us to find our treasure and our lives in Him, and to die to the things...pleasures, pursuits, possessions...of this world. Katie was living in Uganda, Africa and started listening in on our journey through the Word. Then, she started pointing others, through her blog, to listen in with our faith family as we walked through the Word. So, in a real wonderful sense of things coming full-circle, we have the privilege to be encouraged in the Word from her life as she shares with us tonight. She is a sister in Christ from whom we have a lot to learn when it comes to this Word in action. Brook Hills, will you welcome Katie Davis to our faith family?

I know from being around Katie, from reading everything she's written, from her countenance and from the way she carries herself that her desire is that Christ would be exalted in her. This story is so much more about Christ than it is about Katie Davis.

DAVID: I want to ask you, Katie, to give us a little bit of a glimpse tonight into Christ in you. Let's start from the beginning: a short-term trip to Uganda. Tell us how that came about and what that was like.

KATIE: I never had Uganda specifically in mind. I just wanted to go somewhere overseas and help out. I had done a lot of volunteer work in Nashville...where I'm from...and I wanted to look at what that looked like in a third-world country. I began applying to different orphanages that I found online, including one that was in Uganda. The director was really sweet and good about communicating and said, "Sure! We'll take a volunteer." I spent a good couple of months trying to convince my mom to come with me on this trip.

During Christmas break of my senior year of high school, we went over there for three weeks. I immediately fell in love with the people and the country. I was so overwhelmed by this need that was unlike any kind of poverty I had ever experienced. I fell more in love with Jesus and wanted to take His Word at face value. As soon as I stepped back on American soil, I knew I had to get back. He had opened my eyes to this need, and I didn't know what I would do about it, but I knew I had to do something.

DAVID: So, that led to thinking three months wasn't enough, maybe a year in Uganda. Then, you'd come back and live a normal life after that in the United States. So, you went back for a year to teach. Give us a glimpse into what that was like.

KATIE: Right, that's exactly what I thought. I had met this pastor while I had been in Uganda who was looking to start a school program for his orphanage. He was paying so much money for the kids in his orphanage to go to outside schools. He wanted to start small with a kindergarten. Over the last years, that has slowly grown into other grades. He said, "I'd love for you to come and help me develop the infrastructure and the class structure." I said, "I'm not a teacher." He said, "Well, God has placed it on my heart to ask you to come back."

Like I said, as soon as I got back to America, I thought, "Okay, I'll do anything that you ask me to do to go back!" So, I got on a plane after I graduated high school. I thought, "I'll take this year off and do this missions thing." I think my parents thought, "She'll get it out of her system." We all thought I'd come back, go to college and have a normal life. I got to Uganda, and it was actually so uncomfortable. I was happy to be there, and I loved the people, but I was so much more uncomfortable than I had ever been coming from Brentwood, Tennessee, which is a community very similar to this one.

I remember the first morning I walked into this barn that they had turned into a classroom, and it was no bigger than one of these sections of seats, but there were 140 little kids just packed in there, back to back. They didn't speak English. Most of them had never seen a white person. Maybe some of them had seen a white person in passing but never really interacted with one. So, I walked into the front of this barn-classroom, and I said, "Hello!" Their little white eyeballs were popping out of their heads! I said, "How are you?" One kid in the corner started to cry. I thought, "Oh no!"

DAVID: Do we have any teachers here tonight who have 140 kids in their classrooms who speak a different language? Is anyone familiar with this? I think you're alone on this one, Katie. Overwhelming!

KATIE: Absolutely overwhelming. As part of my job, I was supposed to teach them English because they teach English in Ugandan schools. I would spend the mornings standing in the front of the room with a ball, and I would say, "This is a ball." They would all say, "This is a ball." Then, I'd hold up a pencil and say, "This is a pencil." They would repeat. We'd do it with various objects. Inevitably, at the end of the day a child would come up with a pencil and say, "This is a ball."

DAVID: They had the first part right, so that's good. They were learning.

KATIE: Right. So, I was in this moment of, "Okay, God. You picked the wrong person. I'm so sorry!" Over the next few weeks though, we were able to find some local teachers and some good translators who were able to come alongside me. We divided the kids up into little groups of 30, and we taught outside in the orphanage compound under trees. It got better.

DAVID: In the process, the Lord began to burden your heart for the need for education for children in Uganda in a way that has played out in amazing ways since then. So, tell us why education is so important? Why is that such a burden on your heart, and how is that played out?

KATIE: Right. I began to see two needs as I was teaching. I would notice a child or two would stop coming to school for a week or two at a time. I was making friends with my translator, Oliver, who is from the community, and she knew a lot of people in the community. I would ask, "Can we go visit this child? Can we see why he or she hasn't come back to school?"

The problem was that a lot of them were living with a single mom or a single dad, or maybe they were completely orphaned and were living with a grandparent, or an aunt, or uncle...someone who really wanted to care for this child, but was struggling just to put food on the table and was not able to pay the minimal amount that the orphanage was charging for school fees. Then, I also saw parents who loved their children, but their children weren't orphans. They were bringing them because, if they lived at the orphanage, they would get to eat three times a day, would get medical care and would get to attend school. So, these people, out of love for their children and knowing that they couldn't provide these things at home, left them at this institution, which was already overcrowded.

So, I said, "Surely there has to be a way that these children can stay with their families and still have their basic needs met." The parents and guardians of these children so badly want them to be educated because many of them grew up uneducated and that has caused them to be unable to have a job. In not having a job, they haven't been able to provide for their children. They want their children to be educated and have a different kind of life. So, I called my parents and emailed friends saying, "If you could make a small donation, I'll use it to feed this child or to get this child to come back to school. That will help keep this family unit together." As 10 turned into 40, and 40 turned into 100, that's how Amazima Ministries that I run today was born.

DAVID: So, somewhere along the way, in all of the teaching and education, the Lord began to shift you from teacher to Mom in a way that you probably did not see coming. Tell us about Agnes.

KATIE: Adoption entered my world before I even knew it was called that. It was about January. Amazima had been established and was growing quickly, and we needed a place to call our office, so that we could register as a non-profit with the Ugandan government as well as with the U.S. government. I had been house-hunting, looking for something tiny...just a one-room. I had been living in a one-room at the orphanage, and that had been plenty. It's Uganda, so there are maybe three houses available to rent. I kept coming back to this one that was kind of big, had four bedrooms, and this little tiny kitchen. I kept saying, "No, this is way too big for me." The landlord would lower the rent. I would say, "That's nice of you, but this is still too big." I really felt God impressing upon me, "This is your house." I thought, "No! No, it's not! It's too big." However, as the landlord continued to lower the rent, it wouldn't have even made sense to live in a smaller house, because it was the same price. So, I started renting this house.

Just a couple weeks later, a house actually fell down just down the road from me. It landed on this nine-year-old, Agnes. Oliver said to me, "We have this little girl. She was under this brick wall. We have to go and pray for her." She'd been taken to the hospital, so we went and when we got to there, we found Agnes lying in a hospital bed. No one had given her

any kind of care because the hospital staff couldn't find a parent or a guardian who would pay for the care when it was given. They had allowed her to lie just there but had not done anything. I said, "Go ahead and do whatever you need to do. I'll figure out a way to pay for it."

They began asking Oliver, "Where is the parent or guardian? Why is there no one taking care of her?" She said her dad died a couple of years ago. Agnes at nine and her seven-year-old and five-year-old sisters, Mary and Scovia, had all—been living in this house together." I thought, "No way! Who cooks for them and takes care of them?" She continued to insist that they took care of each other. They were living in this house by themselves. I thought, "Now, not only are a seven and five-year-old without their sister who is their primary caregiver, but they're without their house because it has fallen down." So, we went to visit them. I didn't think, "Oh, I'll adopt you!" I just thought, "You don't have a house. I have a house. You can come and stay at mine while I figure it out."

I had seen sponsorship work. I began looking for a biological family for these children while thinking, "We'll get them a sponsor, and we'll figure this out." After several weeks of searching, we could not find anyone biologically related or anyone in the community who could take care of these children. God continued to confirm in prayer, "You are the family for these girls that you are searching for." Simultaneously, Scovia, the youngest, began calling me "Mommy." We had grown together, and we were becoming a family even really without me knowing it. So, that's when I began the foster care process, and I started the paperwork with them to one day finalize those adoptions.

DAVID: So, that was Agnes, Mary and Scovia. Then, came along Prosie and Margaret, and then Surmine, then Joyce, and then Sarah. So, for those keeping score at home, that is eight children in a year. That's a lot. So, one year in Uganda; just a simple year. You came back to the United States, but you knew your heart was in Uganda. Tell us what that was like. You had said, "Okay, I'll come back after this year," but obviously, with girls and with the ministry going that changed. Tell us about the wrestling you experienced when you came back here.

KATIE: I was completely broken. Even still it's hard to think about that. So hard! But God is very clear, "*Honor your father and mother.*" I had made this promise to my parents that I would come back. I felt like I had to come back, but I also felt like it was completely wrong to come back. It was so apparent what God was doing in my life in Uganda. It was so apparent to me that Uganda was not a year; Uganda was a lifetime. So, I did come back, and it was completely uncomfortable. It felt like turning my back on what God was trying to do in my life and that's a horrible feeling! Don't ever do that! If God is telling you to do something, just go!

It was also uncomfortable to reenter this world. For the last year, I had two choices of food. You walk into a grocery store in America, and you have 12 choices of food that you can pick for your dog. I think God had stripped me of so many material things during my year in Uganda, even relationships! He's been really faithful to build good community and good relationships around me now in Uganda, but at that point, I didn't have a lot of friends. I didn't have very much of a support system, but as He stripped that all away, He seemed to get so much nearer...so much closer! There wasn't anything else to rely on other than God! My relationship with Him had so deepened that it was hard to come back here and feel like there were all these distractions. I remember writing about a time when I felt like I was able to step out of reliance on God if I wanted to because I had all this stuff! So, I would unconsciously do that, and it was horribly uncomfortable.

DAVID: So, then you decided to take a one-way trip back to Uganda, and along came Helen, Jane, Zula, Tebitah, Grace and then Patricia. For those keeping count, that is 14 girls, but a journey not without heartbreak. So, tell us about Jane.

KATIE: Jane was abandoned by her birth parents when she was about three months old. Everyone in the family was trying to pick up the slack but just couldn't. Aunts and uncles each had multiple children of their own and were trying to work hard to support those children. So, Jane got passed around from relative to relative. When she was between one-and-a-half and two, I started noticing her—wandering around on the dirt path near our home. I would invite her in for lunch, and she would fall asleep on the floor and take a little nap at our house. Then, I would walk her home and sometimes we would look around for a guardian or an adult and not find anyone, so she would spend the night at my house.

That's how I began the conversation with her aunt, asking, "Is there anyone around to take care of this child? If there's absolutely no one, then I'll foster her." I began the process to foster Jane. I did police reports and an ad in the paper to look for her biological parents and no one turned up. In Uganda, you have to foster for three years before you can finalize an adoption, and you have to be 25. We're just waiting that out.

About two-and-a-half years into fostering Jane, a woman showed up at my door. Her name was Nancy. She said that she was Jane's birth mom, and she wanted her child back. "How? Where did you come from? How did you find me?" She actually had Jane's birth certificate to prove that Jane was hers. Most of my kids and most people that I know in Uganda don't even have a birth certificate. I called the social worker who works for the government who has given me custody of my children, and I said, "What do I do?" He said, "You can go to court if you want." So, we did, and custody was granted back to her birth mom. That was so hard! It was devastating. It felt in a lot of ways like losing a child. They lived about five hours from us for the first several months. This was last October. It's been almost a year.

Then in April or May, Nancy showed up at the door again with Jane. She said, "I lost my job. I've been evicted from my house. I don't have anywhere to go. I don't know how to parent this child." So, we opened our gate a little wider and Jane and Nancy both came to live with us for a little while. We've since been able to find Nancy a job. She's working for Amazima doing some translation for us, and she and Jane live down the street. It's been really cool to see how God's redemption is so beautiful in so many different ways. I spend my whole life trying to advocate for children to stay in their biological family. That's the whole idea of sponsorship. I love adoption, and I'm so happy and privileged to be the Mom of my children. I also recognize that there's been huge tragedy in their lives to bring them to a place of needing to be adopted. I think it's great that God can choose to redeem that by adoption into a family. In Jane's case, God chose to bring Nancy back into her life and redeem that relationship. He's spoken to me, "I did this because I don't just want Jane to have a family, but I also want Nancy to have a family. I don't just want Jane to know me. I want Nancy to know me." So, they're friends now. They're around and doing well.

DAVID: Wow. Thirteen girls in the home, and then all kinds of people constantly at your gate, constantly at the home...men and women, people who are sick, people who are homeless. Give us a glimpse of the kind of people who are constantly flooding into your home.

KATIE: Right. People in the community and my staff kind of jokingly call my house "Grand Central Station." There's no telling who you'll find there: someone who needs a glass of water, someone who needs a meal, someone who needs medical care, someone who needs advice or prayer, short-term missionaries who are just dropping by because they want to

sink in to a couch and want a home-cooked meal with a family. It's been so awesome to expand my definition of adoption from a legal process with children to an accepting of people into our family.

A great example is a guy who is living with us right now. His name is Makerere. I guess I should preface that we moved about a year ago and, in the backyard of this house we moved into, there is a cement block. It has four little rooms in there...just a closet sized, four-cement wall square. So, I thought, "What is this? Who has this in the backyard?" I thought we'd maybe store stuff in there, but we don't have a ton of stuff that we need storage room for. Of course God has used that to allow us to move even more people. We had previously had people live with us like single women, grandmothers or children who needed a place to go short-term who had lived with us on a temporary fostering basis, but this has allowed us to move some homeless families into this little house in the backyard.

Makerere is a guy, and so he needs to live in the house in the backyard. We're able to live in community and have a little bit of separation for our family. About six to eight months ago, Makerere's house was burnt down by the community members of the slum community that he's living in. He was kind of the town drunk, and everyone was annoyed by his drunken antics. His house was burned down. His leg caught on fire and burnt his right calf pretty much to the bone. You think of a burn, and you'd think it would be pink, but it was black. So the social worker who works for Amazima was in the area and brought him to me and said, "I found this guy, and I don't know what to do." I said, "Me either." We washed out his leg, wrapped it up in a bandage, and took him to the hospital and said, "What do I even do about this?" They said, "Well, he's probably just going to lose that leg, but if you'd like to try to prevent that, you need to bandage his leg every day." I thought, "Oh, okay."

So, we originally tried to get him to move into the house in the backyard. He was so entrenched in his addiction that he felt that he could not be away from alcohol. He kept wanting to go back to Masese where he didn't even have a home but was totally willing to sleep outside if he could just get his fix. I would send someone, or I would go myself to pick him up every day, bring him to my house, wash out his leg and re-bandage his wound. Sometimes, we would go and not be able to find him. He would have wandered somewhere or fallen asleep where we were unable to find him. I'll never forget on Easter Sunday, my social worker found him for me after about four days maybe of not bandaging this wound. I was in the backyard and, as he walked into the front gate, I could literally smell it. The whole yard just smelled like infection, which a lot of you probably don't want to hear this.

DAVID: I'm getting queasy right now. Keep going. It's all right.

KATIE: Sorry! Of course we were having everyone we know in the community over for Easter. I said to my three oldest, "I need you to help finish up dinner." I remember lying on my belly in the grass very close to his leg and tweezing maggots out of this wound. At that point I said, "It doesn't matter." Are you going to throw up?

DAVID: Yeah. I was queasy, and now I'm sick. Absolutely sick. Are there more maggots in the story?

KATIE: Done. The rest of the story is good!

DAVID: I just want to prepare myself. Keep going.

KATIE: We moved him into the house in the backyard, and he began detox, and he was very grouchy about detox, but as he started to get sober, I could do the bandage in about

10 minutes because the wound wasn't as big, but when it was so deep, it was about a 30-minute process to wash it out and bandaging it well. Every day for about 30 minutes, Makerere would tell me a little part of his story. It turns out that he's this really educated guy. He went halfway through the university. About halfway through, he found out that he had HIV, and his family completely disowned him. They wanted to have nothing to do with him after they found out his diagnosis. Feeling like he had nowhere else to turn, he turned to alcohol, and that's when he started drinking and his addiction began. He had been living in another world in this drunken stupor, in the slum of Masese, and he had no idea where any of his family was; he had no one in the world!

On the day he was telling that part of the story, my ten-year-old, Helen, was in the sunroom, and she's especially fond of him. She said, "Oh, we will be your family," and we have been, and he's become part of ours. I'll never forget the day when he was really quiet as I was bandaging his wound. He looked at me and said, "I think I'm out of stories. You tell me one." So, both of our tears fall on the tile floor as I told him the story of Jesus, what He had done in my life, what He wanted to do in Makerere's life and what He had done for all of us.

My children were so excited by the opportunity to share Jesus with Makerere. Pretty much every day as soon as homeschool is finished, you can find one or many of them in the backyard with the children's Bible sharing everything they know about Jesus with Makerere. He's become a great friend. He's happy. He comes to church with us on Sunday. Sometimes if I'm out late at night, he'll wait by the gate to make sure there's someone to open the gate for me when I get home. That's just one example, but we've had so many people come in and out of our lives. It's cool to be able to see what God can do when we just open our doors.

DAVID: I've never gone from being so sick to erupting in my heart in praise in just a couple of minutes. Thank you for where that ended. So, they don't just come to you though. You and your girls go to them. You've mentioned Masese a couple different times. Tell us a little bit about that community and what you and your girls do there.

KATIE: Masese is now one of my favorite places, which is funny because it's a place where I was scared of initially. There is a group called the Karamojong. They're a tribe from northern Uganda, and some of them have migrated to town to try to look for a better life, but they're marginalized and despised by other Ugandans. They're considered primitive, violent, and dirty. They're pushed into this little slum where the worst of their tribal culture, and the worst of town and city life is mixed together...a lot of prostitution, alcohol brewing and picking through scrap metal for livelihood. The children are starving because, traditionally, they find their livelihood in their cattle, but in this packed slum community, they can't have cattle, so they send their children to the streets to beg for food and dig through trash for food.

I found this community by following some of these street children that I had become friends with. I was terrified. These were the people who even the people of Uganda will not be friends with. Because of that, they don't trust outsiders. No one has ever been kind to them. It was a scary place for a little girl to be, but I began working there slowly, and I found out that there was a school nearby where the Karamojong are actually allowed by the government to attend for free, but they don't attend because they're so hungry and that takes precedent. The priority has to be to go to the street and dig through trash for food. It can't be to go to school. So, I thought, "I wonder if we got food back into these schools if they would start coming to class." We started just two days a week, and now five days a week, we feed over 1,800 children at the school of Masese. We've seen so many children

come off the street and go back to class because, now, they receive lunch at the end. That has been really neat; a cool way to see them stay in their community with their parents.

While I was making friends with some of these children, I was meeting their mothers. These were the women who were turning to prostitution, alcohol brewing, scrap-metal picking or other things that were dangerous for them and harmful for their families. I began teaching a small group of them how to make beaded jewelry that Amazima buys from them, and we re-sell here in the United States. The greatest part about the jewelry is that we pay the women so they're able to have enough money to provide for their families. They're able to put some in savings for their future. Then, the extra profit we get from selling the necklaces here at a higher price goes straight back to that feeding program that's in the same community.

The women know that and are so excited and proud. Not only do they provide for their own children, but they also provide for the nutrition of this entire community. That's one of our favorite places to go. My girls and I always go there and do ministry together, and the fear of Masese is completely gone. These people have become our close friends. I even let my three-year-old run, and I can say, "Go find your friends!" She runs around in the community. People know me and my family and would never let anything happen to my children. It's been neat to form friendships with these people. We do Bible studies in the community. My kids love to go there as well.

DAVID: We were joking because Katie has two of her girls with her while she's here. She was talking about how, when she sees them playing on the floor, she thinks, "Oh no! There's germs!" You let your kids play in the slum community where there's rampant disease and all kinds of other things!

KATIE: You know, good missionaries leave their kids at homeschool while they go to the slum. My kids are the kids that have ringworm on their faces because they've been playing with the homeless, but germs in the name of ministry are different than germs just for the sake of rolling on the floor.

DAVID: Okay. So, maggots and now ringworm. Tell us about...and we see it all throughout Scripture...ministry to the orphan and the widow just coming together. How has that happened in this slum community?

KATIE: So many times the child of a single mom has just as much need as an orphan who is living with a different kind of relative. It's been neat to make friends with so many widows and watch them want to help their community and watch my children want to help them.

One good example is JaJa Grace. She was an elderly widow. She really was only probably 55 or 60 but to look at her, you would have thought she was 80 or 90. Life had just been hard for her. Her husband had died of HIV. Her children had died of HIV. She thought maybe one or two of them were living, but they had completely abandoned her. She hadn't heard from them. She lived in this little hut way on the edge of the community in the back. I remember it was always so dark and damp in there. The roof leaked at night when it was raining. She was so malnourished that she hadn't been able to walk in years. She couldn't see. She was back there alone. I don't even know how she was still alive by the time we got there.

Without me knowing it, she had been praying to God, "God, I believe in you, but life is too hard to believe in you. Could you send someone to help me? Could you send someone to be my friend?" I didn't know this as the women in my group were telling me one day, "We've

heard there's this lady on the edge of the community who really needs help. We'd love to go visit her. Will you go and visit her?" My kids and I and a couple friends all trucked down there. As I walked in, she said, "God sent you to me!" I said, "That's great!" So, we began our friendship.

We took her to the hospital where we found out she had HIV and TB. My initial reaction was, "Okay, we're going to have to move her in with us." She really didn't want to. She was old and just wanted to be in her own home. In talking to the twenty women in this beading Bible study group, I said, "If I bring the food, can you look out for her?" They were so excited to help this woman! I provided dry food, soap and some little packets of medicine. Two or three of them would take a day to go down, cook the food, do her laundry and make sure she swallowed her pills.

I think, "Wow, if there's anything better than helping your neighbor, it's enabling your neighbors to help their neighbors." It was really neat to watch all of us come together as friends just to care for this elderly widow in the community. She slowly started to regain her sight just from having vitamins in her food. On Christmas day, we had gone to church, and then we went to take church to her and have lunch with her. She was able to actually stand up for the first time in years and walk around the outside of her small house for us. It was so cool to watch God give her strength and redeem her life in that. Several months later, it was apparent that she was at the end of her life. It was time for her to go and be home with Jesus. She was ready for that. She was ready.

We thought we'd move her in with us. Her TB was communicable and at a really contagious stage, so we rented a little house just down the street from us where we moved her. My children were still going to regular public school at that time. They would come home from school, run inside and put on their little dentist's masks. They had told us that we could be with her but to stay 10 feet away. That wasn't going to work well for my family, so we just wore little masks. They were so excited to run up to her house to hang out with her and share stories about her day. By the time she died, we had moved her to a hospital, and we were able to be in the hospital with her the couple days before she died. She was excited to be going home to be with Jesus. I was excited for her. We miss her, but I'm so thankful to know where she is. That was several years ago, but she was one of the first people to open our lives to not just adopting children into our family, but adopting all kinds of different people into our family.

DAVID: Is there such a thing as an average day in Katie Davis' life? What might we expect if we were in your shoes? What does a day look like in your life?

KATIE: It can look like so many things. If it's not a day that we're out doing ministry in the village, I get up and I have a lot of coffee. That's the theme of my trip here: have a lot of coffee. We have breakfast. We have the same thing every single day. We have bread with peanut butter. Then we all get on the couch and do Bible time together. For history, we study a different third-world country, often one that doesn't have Christian influence in it. We pray for that country and continue to study it throughout the week. Then, we break into our different groups of math and spelling. Whatever is going on, my kids just know that people will come and need help. I will have to stop and go help them. They're so flexible and keep right on doing their work. Occasionally, they'll look up and say, "Mommy, are you okay? Do you need help? We're still doing our work."

DAVID: Like, help with some pretty significant things. You mentioned sometimes people will want a cup of water or someone to pray with, but sometimes people need an IV and what do your kids do?

KATIE: They run and get the IV kit.

DAVID: They help you fix an IV! I'm just pointing that out because my five-year-old and three-year-old are not quite there yet.

KATIE: Well, only the older kids are allowed to go in the closet where the medical stuff is. We're talking like 13 and 16-year-olds. When I thought that I was going to go to college and be normal, I really wanted to be a nurse. I've been able to take some emergency missionary classes. Groups of doctors come in and teach crash courses. We also do a clinic for the people of Masese with some different registered nurses from Uganda. I just sit on the edge of my chair and watch everything they do.

Several months ago someone brought a woman to our door. She was on the back of the motorcycle. Her friend was carrying her. She was, obviously, in shock. I didn't know what from but her eyes were rolled back in her head, and she was seizing and foaming at the mouth. I thought, "Okay, we've got to get her in the car and take her to the hospital, but she's going to be dead by the time we get there if we don't get some fluid into her body." That's one of those moments when kids are doing wordly-wise or whatever they're doing, and I say, "Prosie, run and get me all the things I need to run an IV." She came out and was holding the bag as we got this lady ready. I jumped in the car and took her to the hospital. She ended up being fine. I don't think I said that when I told the story this morning. She's good!

DAVID: That's good. That's an important detail.

KATIE: I came home an hour later, and my kids were like, "Hey, Mom, how's that lady? Oh, we're done with math."

DAVID: Just another day. I think you're helping us in a lot of ways to kind of de-romanticize stories that we have a tendency to romanticize. What would you say are some of the biggest struggles that you face?

KATIE: I've told you the story of JaJa Grace and the story of Makerere. Those are stories with good endings, but the stories don't always have a good ending. We've had an alcoholic mother living in our home and have poured into her hours and hours of our lives, our family and our resources. We thought she was doing better, and she'd relapse. We'd give her one more chance and think she was doing better, and she'd relapse. We finally had to say, "You can't live here anymore." It was getting dangerous for my family. She had to give her child up into a foster care situation with another foster family.

There are people who move in Muslim and leave Muslim. Sometimes I get to see the fruit, and sometimes I only get to plant the seed, but I believe absolutely that God is sovereign, and He will grow that to fruition in His own way. I'm impatient and want to see the fruit. It's discouraging, but for every story with a discouraging ending, there are so many stories with good endings. Also, the need is so great...so great...that there is this woman on my porch who we can get the fluid in her and get her to the hospital so she is okay, but ten minutes away, there was someone who was unable to get to the hospital for medical care on time and died. I can feed this hungry person in front of me, but ten minutes away there is a child who is starving to death. It's hard to reconcile that God is still good and sovereign in that moment with that person.

I think He has really confirmed for me over the course of the year, "You be faithful in the little. You be obedient to the person that I've put in front of you, and I will be faithful in the much...in the big." We serve the one person or the two or three people He's put in front of us for that day and just trust Him to take care of the rest. He's been so faithful to multiply and multiply that. I see 13 little girls who love Jesus. I see people like Makerere who come into our lives and leave knowing Christ. I see 450 sponsored children who are learning to know Him. I think of how their reach will be so much greater than mine. God's been confirming that over and over again in my life...that I must be faithful in the small, and He'll be faithful in the big.

DAVID: Do you think what you're doing is radical?

KATIE: No. I think it's just what is natural. It's what comes from a relationship with Jesus and an overflow of the love that He's given me in my life. I think that what I'm doing is abnormal, but I don't think it should be. People say, "Why do you do what you do," or "How do you do what you do?" In light of what Christ has done for me, how could I not?

[End of Interview]

What the Gospel Compels...

We were praying this morning that the story of what Christ has done in Katie Davis' life would then shift to the story that Christ is weaving in your life. So, the same gospel that has saved her is the same gospel that has saved you. The same Spirit who lives in her is the same Spirit who lives in you. What I love about what she just shared there is that it wasn't like one day, she said, "Okay, I'm going to bring 14 girls into my home and do this and that and have this ministry." It was, "I'm going to be faithful with what's in front of me that God has told me to do, and I'm going to trust Him to do it." What if we in this room took God at His Word? Because the same gospel that is compelling her is compelling us!

Simplify your living.

This is a key moment. Shift with me for a second. Bring this into your seat, because the same gospel that's compelling Katie Davis is the same gospel that is compelling all of us to simplify our living. I'm not saying this will all look exactly like it's looked in Katie's life, but the Bible has told us all to be content with having necessities. So, what does this look like for you? What does this need to look like for your family? How can we get rid of the clutter in our lives that numbs our sensitivity to our need for God? We don't pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," because we have 12 choices for bread. How can we be intentional? Paul says, "Be content with these things."

Increase your giving.

To simplify your living, and to increase your giving. So, based on Katie's life, examples all throughout the New Testament and Scriptural exhortations in the New Testament, I ask three questions. I would ask you: what is God leading you to share? You have possessions of clothes, food and house. What is God leading you to share? Be generous and ready to share. This is the charge from 1 Timothy 6. What is God leading you to sell? In Luke 12:33, Jesus says, "*Sell your possessions, and give to the needy.*" What is God leading you to share, to sell? What is God leading you to sacrifice? This is where we go from just giving because it feels good, to giving to the point where it hurts. Sacrificial giving doesn't ask, "How much can I keep?" Sacrificial giving asks, "How much can I give, even when it hurts?" Obviously, that will look different all across this room.

Remember the widow's mite. She put in much less than everybody else, but she gave much more than everybody else...extravagant, sacrificial giving. It may be sacrifice for someone to give 25 dollars in a way that it wouldn't be a sacrifice for somebody to give a million dollars. If somebody makes ten million dollars in a year, it's not much sacrifice to give away nine million and think, "Well, I'm only going to live on a million this year." That's an extreme example, but what would happen if we were giving sacrificially in this culture? Or if we really believed God on this one and gave until it hurt?

Consider your going.

Simplifying living, increasing giving and then consider your going. In so many different ways spread across this room...so, go here locally, whether you live in Birmingham or if you're visiting from outside of Birmingham, go where you live to impoverished communities. There are, obviously, communities in Birmingham that are in great need. It was mentioned earlier the work that we're intentionally doing alongside our impoverished brothers and sisters in areas that were heavily hit by the tornadoes. You can go to the website and learn more about a practical way to put this into practice. It might lead to who-knows-what amidst impoverished communities.

Then, amongst needy children, there are continual opportunities for foster care that are constantly before our faith family. We've really taken a big push towards Shelby County, but we have a whole Jefferson County that is still waiting. What would happen if we said, "We're going to care for all the kids not just in our county, but in our city?" Has God given us the resources to do this? Meaning the homes, love, grace, the gospel in us? Then, domestic or international adoption where millions of kids are without moms or dads.

So, going in those ways here, and then going around the world. There are opportunities to go short-term. I'm speaking, specifically, to members of The Church at Brook Hills faith family. You heard Katie talking about how a trip to Uganda turned everything upside down. Or she would say right-side up. There are so many opportunities. You can be involved in going short-term. All ages! We were just talking at lunch about an 84 year-old woman who was recently serving short-term alongside ministry in Uganda.

Going short-term leads to mid-term. High school students...take a gap for a year before college. Let's Mormonize this thing, but with a good gospel, a true one. Let's do this! Okay? We have golden opportunities before us. You're in college...we're talking about mid-term: three months to two years. There are so many opportunities in there...a summer or a semester. Not just students, but semi-retired and retired brothers and sisters who have opportunities to go. Mid-term, leading to long-term. That God might lead, undoubtedly, will in this room. Maybe not all of us but maybe all. Maybe all of us, but there are certainly some of us that God, by His Spirit, will say, "I want you to live somewhere else."

Who knows what God might do tomorrow when we are faithful today. This is what so excites me as I've prayed for this moment...just hearing one story of how this played out when one sister in Christ takes the Lord at His Word. What happens when individuals or families take Christ at His Word? When we take steps of obedience that are right there or when we do what He's told us to do. Then, He takes that...some in grand ways...and turns it into stories like this or even greater, and some in not so grand ways in the eyes of the world, but in wonderfully grand ways because it's faithfulness to God. This is where the gospel compels us to do these things. It's going to look different in different ways.

I would encourage you, especially if you're a member of this faith family, to say, "I'm open. I'd like to talk to somebody about going mid-term or long-term." Contact us if you want

more information about mid-term or long-term opportunities, or foster-care or adoption...incredibly important ministries.

What the Gospel Demands...

We, as a church, want to help one another think through how this looks in action in each of our lives, but regardless of what it looks like, the gospel demands the same thing from every one of us. I use that word, "demands," and you heard Katie use it earlier. It sounds a bit forceful, but it's really only natural when you realize that He is the grave-conquering King who has all authority over our lives as Christians. What it means is we sacrifice the right to determine the direction of our lives. So, the gospel demands; there's no other possibility. When we believe this gospel, the gospel demands a blank check from our lives, with our possessions, with our plans, with our dreams. The gospel demands a blank check today. Not tomorrow to dream about, but today. So, I want to call you to take this story from, "What is Christ doing in Katie Davis' life?" to, "What does Christ desire to do in my life?"

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