

Why I Am So Grateful For All I've Been Given, And How Paying Back The Debt I Owe Has Brought Me So Much Joy

By Christopher P. McGuire



I consider myself exceptionally fortunate. I am lucky to have been born in the United States, I am blessed to have been raised by two wonderful parents who instilled in me a strong work ethic, loved me unconditionally, and taught me that God loves me the same way. Fortune has also smiled on me because I was born healthy and without disabilities, obtained the finest education, and have always had access to excellent health care, housing, clean water, electricity, and efficient transportation. We often take these things for granted.

I am also lucky to be alive. Nine years ago, I had a near death experience as a result of a serious medical emergency. Due to outstanding medical care, the prayers of my family and friends, and the grace of God, I fully recovered. I later became close friends with one of my doctors, James Bopp, MD.

The debt I owe God for giving me a second chance at life has weighed heavily on me. Although my wife and I have financially sponsored children in developing countries for many years prior to my medical emergency, after my episode, I committed to do more hands on mission work to intimately give back the gifts I've been given. I envisioned that we would do this work in retirement a decade or so from now.

A chance encounter with a woman who requested my help to provide medical care to AIDS orphans in Africa accelerated my plans, and last year I formed a charity with my friend, Dr. Bopp, the doctor who helped save my life. Together, we share a vision of helping those less fortunate, and we have committed to provide medical care and educational assistance to orphans in developing countries. Our charity, HALO Missions, is named after my deceased parents, Harold and Loretta (HALO).

Due to the AIDS epidemic, there are more than 13 million orphans in Sub-Saharan Africa. Many of these children live without adult supervision, are in need of medical attention, and cannot attend school because they cannot afford the necessary uniforms and supplies. It is striking to consider that the only difference between our childhood and the orphans' is the fortune of the time and place of our respective births. It is also humbling to observe that we the auspicious don't merit all we've been given any more than the underprivileged orphans don't deserve all they've been denied. That is why our charity has made a zealous and open-ended commitment to provide hope to the children we attend - by giving them, to the best of our ability, the opportunity to live a good life.

Last September, HALO Missions travelled to Zambia, and we worked with Teenmissions International to conduct a joint project. Our team provided medical care to more than 600 AIDS orphans and their caregivers. Patients were treated for malaria, parasites, ringworm, infections, wounds, burns, and other injuries. In addition, our team donated monies to purchase more than 100 school uniforms for the orphans and to complete an unfinished wing at a local elementary school. Finally, we provided toothbrushes, toothpaste, eyeglasses, sports equipment, candy, and other gifts for the children.

The mission work was hard, with long days and little sleep, but we all felt as though we received so much more than we gave. All of the missionaries agreed that the time we spent with the orphans was the best time of our lives, and my words cannot justly describe the honor we all felt to be in their presence, or the joy we felt in helping them.

Once again I feel fortunate, this time for having been able to hear God's calling, and for having been given the means to carry out that calling and to serve Him by helping them.

HALO is now assembling a team to provide advanced dental and ophthalmic care, in addition to general medical care, on our next mission in October, 2016. We also will provide the orphans with shoes and clothing.

HALO Missions is run by volunteers, and all travel expenses are paid by missionaries so all donations go directly to medical and educational supplies for the children. HALO Missions is an approved IRC§501C charity and is registered with the NYS Attorney General's Office.

Doctors and nurses and individuals wishing to volunteer or contribute should visit www.halomissions.org