

# The Messer Message

## April 2008

Dear praying friends and family,

Have you ever said or heard someone say, "Life is not fair!" Having six children, I do hear that phrase off and on. Usually it is when the child thinks that he/she is getting the raw end of a deal. Well, lately, I've been telling my children that life really is not fair. It is not fair that they each have a bed in a dry, warm, completely-covered-with-a-roof, house! It is not fair that they get to eat three meals each day, and have so much food that they often say, "I'm stuffed," or "No thanks, I'm too full."

This month, we became aware of a family in serious need. They used to go to our church and then moved to the Cuthbertson's church (my sister and her husband.) I don't think they were going too faithfully. When Dan and Joan went out to visit them (perhaps to see why they had not been to church in a while,) they saw that the wife, Rebecca, was pregnant. The husband said she had been sick and had not felt the baby move for a couple of days. Let me tell you about their house. It is near the beach (great view!) and it is very big. However, it is totally unfinished. Whoever started it must have run out of money. There is no roof on most of the house. The walls are not plastered and the floors are not tiled. It is just a big, ugly, dark grey, cement shell of a house. The family would be called "squatters" in English. They live there for free (good thing because they have no money!) The husband has no job. They have 4 kids ages 10, 8, 6 and 2. They have no screens on any windows and as I said, most of the house is just open (malaria risk is huge!) The husband was bringing home 3 frogs for them to cook and eat for supper. Now, before you gag, remember that people eat frog legs in fancy restaurants. It's not the fact that they are eating frogs that bothers me. It's the fact that he only brought home three of them for the whole family.

Well, to make a long story short (it took 4 days!) we (Joan and I) took Rebecca to the Hospital. The baby was indeed dead as we had feared (Joan had been unable to hear a heartbeat with her stethoscope.) When Rebecca and I were crying after the Dr. told her the baby was dead, the hospital staff began to tell us how we should not cry... I say, "Why ever not?" On our way out of that area, a man asked what was wrong. When I told him, he said, "Oh, that is no big deal. At least the woman is OK." That is the mentality here. Life is NOT precious. Ok, so after a couple of days in the hospital (EVERYTHING IS SO SLOW!) and a blood transfusion (the Dr. said her platelets were low and he did not want to risk her bleeding) Rebecca finally delivered the baby. It was a boy (they have 3 girls and 1 boy). The cord was wrapped around the baby in several places and Joan thinks that is what killed it. The problem was that the baby came out breach (feet first) and the midwife who seemed to be in a hurry jerked hard to get the rest of the baby out (NOT GOOD!) Rebecca tore really badly (up inside) and began to bleed a lot. She was going into shock and my sister, Joan, was insisting that the nurse call the Doctor. They would have let her sit there and bleed to death! I'm not exaggerating. The Doctor was able to sew her up and stop the bleeding. She received two more bags of blood that night and by the grace of God (we were praying SO much for her!) she survived! Not so for the teenager who had been admitted around 2 PM with high blood pressure and seizures at 7 months pregnant. She was breathing raspy around 3 PM. Joan told the nurse that her breathing did not sound good and she should get a Doctor. The nurse said, "It's OK, she is scheduled for a C-section." The nurse did not call the Dr. At 8 PM, Joan told the nurse that the breathing was really getting worse and they should do something! After that, Joan was really busy trying to help Rebecca deliver her dead baby. When Rebecca was bleeding out around 9 PM, the staff had still not operated on the young pregnant girl. When I saw her that afternoon, she was rolling around on the dirty tile floor at the hospital with her IV bag on the floor beside her. (Very unclean and high risk for infection!) If only you could see what the conditions are like out here! You would fully understand why we do home births! Well, after the Dr. repaired Rebecca's tear, did he do the teenager's C-section? NO! They went to supper! When they got back around 11:30 PM, they checked on Rebecca—she was not bleeding, praise the Lord. Then, they decided to take care of the teen girl. Was life fair for her? She and her unborn child died just before she got into the operating room. Yes, I tell my children, life is not fair. When David was sick, we took him to Abidjan and got excellent medical care. We were able to pay for it. For the Ivorian who has no money, death is almost guaranteed.

Joan and I felt really bad about what happened at the hospital. A lot of it was just plain incompetence on the part of the nurses... The Doctors are good, but they don't work without the money in hand. It is sad. Joan has spoken to the director about this whole situation. She has even offered to teach a midwifery class to help prevent some of these things. We'll see what shall come of it. She did not want to complain unless she had something constructive to add toward finding a solution. I think more training could help the nurses to know that difficulty breathing is an emergency, heavy bleeding is an emergency, never jerk a baby out of a mother, never mash on a mother's belly when she is in labor... The list goes on and on.

Well, life is never really dull out here. It's not always fair, but I am so thankful that we are so blessed. Good health, good food, comfortable home, adequate clothes, clean living area... So so blessed! I'm so thankful to the Lord for all He provides for us and I'm thankful to you all who give and help us live out here! All of David's medical bills have been paid! 100%! David himself is totally recovered. He is back to full strength! Thank you to all who prayed for him. God really healed him completely! This month we went back to Abidjan and got to stay at Dr. Kamal's house again. We had several good discussions with him about Bible issues. He is still growing but very slowly. It is not easy for a Muslim to separate himself from Islam. Pray for Dr. Kamal to start going to church and get baptized. We discussed these things with him along with other issues. He is still reading his Bible, and for that we are thankful.

We've been able to help Rebecca (the one who lost the baby) and her family (for a little while at least). Pray that her husband will find work so that he can support his family and feed them at least! We like to help people, but we are concerned for their long term well being.

The church and ministries (Bible School, Visitation, Ladies' Class...) are going well. We ask you to pray for spiritual growth and faithfulness among the members. There have been new believers to join the flock—pray that they will grow strong. The members are learning about patience and putting God's Word into practice. Please be in prayer for three of our Bible school men: Jean, Williams and Parfait. They will finish up their Bible School courses in June and will begin a year long internship program with our church in August. Please also be in Prayer for three couples who still need to complete the dowry for their marriage.

Thank you to all of you our faithful friends and supporters! Please feel free to contact us by e-mail if you would like a current list of our field projects. May God bless you. And remember, if you think life is not fair, maybe you should be glad that it is not!

Much Love,  
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