

## *Ghana Trip – Epilogue*

Hi, all!

I just wanted to follow up on the completion of my part of the Ghana trip, and reflect a little on the meaning of it all.

Our trip home from Ghana was relatively uneventful – all flights were on time, all baggage arrived (although one of my bags was destroyed, but the contents were fine; I was given a brand new one to replace it), and our drive back to Mukwonago was relaxing. Oh, it is so good to be home with my family!

Yet, despite the lack of issues in our travel back to Wisconsin, the last 72 hours have been very difficult and very emotional ones for us. Not only was I leaving my dear friends, the McIntyres for at least a year, there have been other things going on. Let me try to explain what I do not yet understand:



- On our last day in Ghana, Brian & Debbie found out that their lease was not renewed, and that they would have to move by the end of November. That may not sound like a big deal, but Ghana is different than the States; rents are paid up front covering two years. In other words, for a place that is large enough for the family and the orphans they have and will be taking in, they will likely need to come up with more than \$20,000 US. Plus the hassles of moving – it's not like you can rent a U-Haul in Ghana. Instead, all your worldly possessions are put on a flatbed truck for everyone to see and covet; the risk of crime certainly increases with such a display. It's hard to figure out the Lord's timing in this; just when it seems that things are rolling with the orphan home, etc., this happens. God in His sovereignty could have prevented this from happening, but He did not; what are His purposes in this?
- The baby girl has taken some steps backwards health-wise. She is feverish (about 104 degrees) and may have to go back to the horrible hospital that she was in before coming to Brian & Debbie. God in His sovereignty could have prevented this from happening, but He did not; what are His purposes in this?
- Thinking back to our little baby boy who was abused and abandoned, whipped bloody and had his leg broken. God in His sovereignty could have prevented this from happening, but He did not; what are His purposes in this?
- Thinking back to last week when Mike's girlfriend's father died of a heart attack just days before their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. God in His sovereignty could have prevented this from happening, but He did not; what are His purposes in this?
- Today (Thursday, the day after I got home) my son Mike was in a bad car accident on his way back to Whitewater after his last day working at a camp in Lake Geneva. He seems to be OK; a mild concussion, a few cuts and scrapes, but nothing broken – he's asleep on the couch across from me even as I write this. The car was totaled, but thankfully the people in the car he hit seem to be OK. God in His sovereignty could have prevented this from happening, but He did not; what are His purposes in this?

It's so easy to look at all these things and get discouraged or even angry at God for allowing these things to happen. But I am not; instead I am thankful to Him for His ultimate goodness. How can that be? God in His sovereignty could have prevented all of these things from happening, but He did not; what are His purposes in all of this? It turns out that I don't need to know His purposes; I just need to know that He is good.

A few mornings into the trip, I was praying about some of the issues we were facing, and my prayers focused around Romans 8:28:

*“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28)*

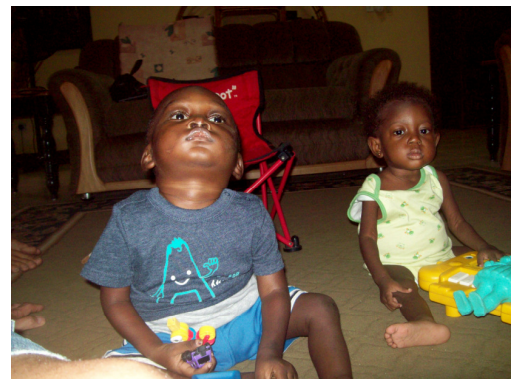
What follows is an excerpt from my prayer journal of that morning:

*Lord, I want to know you more, and to love you more; I want to give my life in service to you, for you are the God of the universe, and you have created me and redeemed me for your holy purposes. You are God; I am creature, I am derivative. You are holy and righteous; I am sinful and imperfect. You are almighty and all-knowing; I am weak and unknowing. You are from everlasting to everlasting; I am created, with a beginning, dependent on you for every breath. You are glorious and full of splendor; I am not. But you have redeemed me, Lord, that I might be able to stand before you without condemnation; you are making me to be that which I was not but was created to be. You are remaking me in your image, Lord, that I might reflect your glory and give you honor.*

*This is why I know that you work all things for good - for the display of your goodness and glory, and for my ultimate growth in you. This is why I am here in Ghana, as well as the McIntyres, the Adell team, and soon the Brooklife team. You want to work your good in us and through us; you want us to see more of you, to grow us in you, and to use us for your glory. Father, let us do that! So even in the setbacks, in the changes of plans, in the broken refrigerators, in the hardships of life here, in the illnesses, in every breath, in the every aspect of life here - work these all for good, Lord, and for your glory!*

I am confident in God's ability to make all these things work for good – His good and our good. Even though I don't see all the good now, I know He is faithful.

- I see our baby boy being loved up and beginning to smile more; God rescued this boy from death and brought him to a place of security and love; He is working good in this.
- Our baby girl's sickness is what brought her to a place where she can be nourished physically and spiritually; even before we left we could see her putting some meat on her skinny little legs. God rescued this girl from death; He is working good in this.
- Meagan told me today when we were at the hospital with Mike that a friend of hers put her trust in Jesus because of what she heard at her dad's funeral. God is working good in this.



- Mike's accident could have been a lot worse – he missed a tree by inches, left a lot of paint on a guard rail, and came out much better than the car did. No one was killed; the damage is mostly material things that can be replaced. Do I yet see the good in this? No, but I am confident that God is working good in this.
- McIntyres will have to go through the hassle of finding a new place to live and moving; that could be a set back for their ministry, and it may be hard right now to see the good. But I remain confident that God is working good in this as well.

Do you have that same confidence? God never promises that we will live pain-free lives when we trust in Him for our salvation, but He does promise to be with us in every challenge we face. And He promises to work *all* things for good – a promise that is true for those who love the Lord and are called according to His purpose.

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Thanks so much for reading these rather long reflections each day, especially this one! Thanks to each of you for praying for this trip, for supporting this trip, for checking up on my family while I was gone, and for your kind notes and thoughts. I truly felt and feel supported in my involvement in West African Mercy Ministries, and hope that you gained at least a little insight into what my passion for life: to know and glorify the Lord Jesus!



In His Mercy, for His Glory,  
Jim