



Capstone Ministries

Child and Family Restoration Outreach

"The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone" Psalm 118:22

A prayer letter from Dan and Patty Schmelzer, Kisumu, Kenya

February, 2011 Volume 6 Issue 2

"I'll be home for Christmas"

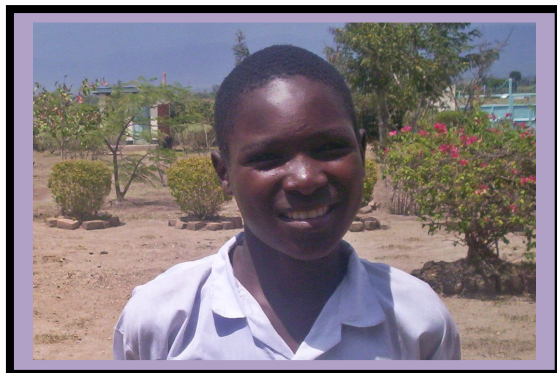
"So he got up and went to his father." Luke 15:20

When Bing Crosby sang *"I'll be home for Christmas"* in late 1943, it instantly topped the charts as one of America's most popular Christmas songs. Jimmy Gannon wrote the lyrics. It was Crosby's fifth gold record, back when a gold record was a really big deal. "I'll Be Home For Christmas" was a perfect sentimental wartime song with deep meaning to U.S. troops overseas. Once the Allies landed in Normandy in June of 1944 and pushed their way through France, they were knocking on Germany's door by early December, 1944. *"I'll Be Home For Christmas"* was on the lips of GI's and civilians back home alike.

Home and Christmas have always been sentimental twins. But some who are separated by sin and guilt at Christmas find the stress and emotional pain of separation to be overwhelming.

Stories about Christmas reconciliation are extremely powerful. Obviously the Parable of the Lost Son didn't take place at Christmas but the elements of reconciliation are still there. The son had hit rock bottom, understood his sins, remembered a kind and loving father back home and had begun rehearsing his confession. But he had not taken a step back home yet.

All of us have been there. We said or did something hurtful. We knew we had done wrong. We may even have thought long and hard about how we would apologize, rehearsed the very words. Then comes contemplation: the pause between consideration and action.



Many can remain in that limbo of contemplation for a lifetime. Paralyzed by fear and regret. And it can leave families separated, friends alienated and individuals with nothing to hang on to than the self destructive animal called "Bitterness."

At Capstone, we have found that it can be helpful to have a friend, a go-between, someone to encourage you on that long and fearful journey back to a point of pain in your life. It can also help to have a reason to be seen positively on your return back home to family.

It was with this in mind that we approached Christmas 2010 and asked some of the boys on the street if they would like to go home for Christmas. And although Christmas is seen by Kenyans as a time to feast and celebrate, the rural poor often have very little with which to celebrate. What if...what if we challenged the boys that if they would go home just for Christmas, we would go with them, and bring along a Christmas package of food and supplies to help their family. Instead of the returning boy being seen by the family as a point of shame and a burden, they come home with blessings to enable the family to really rejoice on Christmas. And if all goes well, who knows...you might even be able to stay at home. Interestingly, four boys took us up on the offer. They went home on Christmas Eve, accompanied by one of our staff.

The reports came back just after the New Year. All four boys were still at home. Families were so grateful for the Christmas package, all they could think about was the blessing. The obstacles between the boy and the family seemed to lose their power in the joy of celebration.

"Home for Christmas!" When Jimmy Gannon wrote those words for Bing Crosby, I doubt he ever dreamed that 68 years later, the words of that song would inspire an idea in Kenya for reconciling street boys and their families. But I'm sure the author of The Parable of the Lost Son knew.

Praises, Prayers and Recent News

1. Praise God for the numerous congregations who understand our vision and approach to helping street children reconcile with their family.
2. In February we will hire three new staff, two welfare officers and an operations supervisor. Pray for God's leading.
3. Pray for the 7 new boys at the Transition Center: Dennis, Titus, William, Derek, Moses, Daniel and Collins.
4. January is always such a busy month. We have been taking applications for new positions and doing interviews. We will also be doing staff evaluations in Feb.



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Patty's Post It

When we visited the US this past year, some asked how they could pray for us. I remember we often mentioned the process of hiring new employees and asked for prayer in finding the just right person to work for Capstone. That is still our prayer; and prayer is how we began before the first candidate was called for interview this morning.

The process began weeks ahead of the interviews by sending word out of the vacancy and collecting applications. We had many, too many to interview so we sifted through and "short listed" the most qualified candidates. Today we had eight candidates for the position of Welfare Officer.

I believe our process is a bit different than many in Kenya. Usually all candidates are called to arrive at 8:00am and will sit and wait for their turn. Imagine arriving at 8:00am for your interview and being the last one called, you could be sitting and waiting from four to six hours or more. We decided to give appointment times and stagger the applicants arrival. For the most part it worked well although one young lady was very eager, her appointment was at 10:30 but she arrived at 8:30am. Better early than late!

The interviewers were Dan and I, Paul a board member and George an employee who works to coordinate the Welfare Officers. We each had a sheet with 10 questions. Each candidate is asked the same questions and scored according to their responses. The questions are weighted from 1 to 5. Number one represents the weakest score and number five being the strongest. We are amazed that we all tend to score the candidates similarly and can easily see on paper who is the strongest.

We had three ladies who interviewed today and to our surprise two of them were actually over qualified for the positions. One lady in particular really stood out and impressed all of us. We haven't made any final decisions at the time of this writing but we'll take it back to prayer and ask for God's leading. Thank you for praying with us!

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