



Hearth and Home

Sabbath School Feature for ADRA Canada's Disaster and Famine Relief Offering on May 11, 2019

This Sabbath School quarterly has gone straight to our hearths and homes by focusing on family. Our study is reminding us of the Biblical foundations of family as well as the intended role of family in its members' lives and in the world. I hope it has been inspiring and challenging each of us in our own family lives. I pray we are working to bring our families into harmony with God's plan, to enjoy the blessings that God intends through family, and to share the blessings that God has bestowed on us with others.

As I consider "family," I cannot help but remember that this concept is extended beyond that of Father, Mother, Brother, Sister. We are a part of the human family. "And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living." (Genesis 3:20, NKJV) We know, though we often forget, that every human on earth is descended from our original parents, Adam and Eve. Though today the relation is quite distant indeed, yet we are still family. We are each created in God's image, though we may be vastly different from each other in appearance, culture, and even beliefs.

We are also a part of the family of God. "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!" (1 John 3:1, NKJV) Because of Jesus' sacrifice, we are adopted children of God, brothers and sisters to Jesus and to each other in this heavenly, holy family. Each of us is precious, for we were bought at a great price.

Understanding all of this, that we are members of the human family and the family of God, we can and should look on every acquaintance and

stranger, whether near or far, as a part of our family. They are valuable in God's sight, every bit as valuable as we are.

I am going to share a story with you. I want you to imagine that this story is about your own sister. Though her looks, her religion, and her culture may be greatly different from your own, please engage your imagination and your heart to hear her story as though she were your family member.

At 38, Sajida is a young matriarch. With nine children and three grandchildren, she feels responsible for her large family. There are many to provide for, many to protect.

From her remote village, Sajida enjoyed the views of the lush, green rice paddies, the hills, and the lake. As Rohingya, an ethnic minority, they were limited in their ability to get an education, to earn their livelihood, and to travel outside their village. Yet, they still made a life for themselves.

One day, they heard rumours that the military was making its way to their village. Sajida and her family locked themselves in their home for two days. Then they fled their hearth and home to hide in caves in the hills. They hid for three days.

While in hiding, they heard about a group who had decided to make their way to neighbouring Bangladesh. Sajida and her family decided to join them. It was a perilous journey of 19 days, over mountains and through military ambushes. They scavenged for food along the way. Sajida was in such a traumatized state, she was hardly aware of hunger. The safety of her children was all she could think about.

Finally, after much suffering and heartache, Sajida and her family made it to Bangladesh. They had nothing but the tattered clothes on their backs. No hearth. No home. Nothing. They were alive and they were safe. But what to do next?

When you think of Sajida as your sister as you listen to her story, you cannot help but be deeply moved. When you consider her as your sister -



which she may well one day be your sister in Christ - her story becomes personal. It is not possible to simply say, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed." (James 2:16, NIV) You feel the need to help her, the same as you would your sister by blood. But what to do? Even if you flew to Bangladesh, what could you possibly do for her?

My dear church family, there is a way to help Sajida, and all our other brothers and sisters in need. Our church has a ministry with the ability and the expertise to reach our far-flung family members who are caught in distress. ADRA, with our support, is able to bring relief to those in suffering, whether from conflict, disaster, hunger, or drought.

With our support, ADRA has been able to extend God's love in tangible ways to Sajida and her family. Sajida received a shelter kit from ADRA, which included the materials and tools they needed to construct a solid shelter to protect them from the elements and to provide privacy and security. Though it is by no means their permanent abode, they now have a hearth and home again to call their own, around which they can gather as a family.

Several of Sajida's children go everyday to the Child Friendly Space that ADRA set up. In this space, ADRA is showing God's love for the little children by giving them a safe place to play and learn.

Sajida herself is attending a women's group where she is learning about sanitation and hygiene and how best to protect her family from the diseases that prey on survivors. In this way, ADRA is showing God's care for the wellbeing of His precious ones created in His image and redeemed by His son.

ADRA is only able to do this because of our support. Our willingness to share the blessings of our own hearths and homes is what enables this ministry to touch and change lives with God's tangible love.

Today is the annual Disaster and Famine Relief Offering. Our offerings today will go to help our brothers and sisters in places and circumstances which you and I cannot personally reach, but through ADRA



we can. Let's share our hearths and homes – and our hearts – with our great, extended family. Today and every day. Let's always remember that we are a part of a much larger family, the family of God. Let's remember that Jesus has died for everyone, whether Canadian or Cambodian, Rohingya or Russian, Sudanese or Swedish. All are eternally precious to Him, bought at a high price. Let us seek to always share the love of God in our hearts whenever we can, to whomever we can, wherever we can.

