

Like Father, Like Child

Sabbath School Feature for Sabbath, July 6, 2019

Abdul was born without legs and with severely deformed hands. When he was three years old, he asked his father, “*Will my legs grow when I grow up?*” His question struck his father’s heart. He was unable to answer his son. Instead, tears ran down his cheeks.

Abdul’s question also strikes our hearts. Painful questions come crowding in. Why this innocent child? What is the purpose? What can be done?

Abdul’s handicap prevented him from attending school, making friends, and many other things a child would normally do.

As the only son, he had a responsibility to help support his family. Unable to help his father in the fields, he turned to the age-old profession of the handicapped: begging. A family member would place him at a spot on the street and he would entreat passers-by for money. This was not an easy task for him. Watching all the people moving so freely around him was a discouraging reminder of his own limitations.

Abdul is from a region in Yemen that, in recent years, has seen intense conflict. The violence took out the closest medical facilities. For three years, residents were forced to travel long distances through hostile territory to obtain medical care.

ADRA, in partnership with the Canadian Government, has re-opened a health facility in the region. This project is focusing on essential medical services and nutrition. It also offers a referral program to patients to enable them to reach larger health facilities for more thorough care.

When Abdul's father heard about the ADRA health centre, he decided to take his son. Abdul wasn't sure what they could do for him. The doctors and staff treated him with unexpected kindness and understanding. So often ignored on the side of the street, his young heart was warmed by their attention and care.

To his surprise, the doctors referred him to a hospital in Sana'a, the capital city. Abdul was curious to find out what awaited him at the larger, more established hospital. Once there, the doctors examined him again. Though they could not give him legs, they were able to give him a different kind of mobility. Abdul became the overjoyed recipient of an electric wheelchair.

“While the wheelchair does not recover what I've lost, I can now move more freely and I can now say goodbye to past years of struggle and difficulty,” he said.

Our Sabbath School lesson this quarter is full of profound themes. From the far-reaching implications of creation, to true worship and Sabbath-keeping, to calls for justice, to Jesus' own example, this quarter has revealed deeper, less-explored sides of God's true character and what He asks us to do.

Though often quoted, the power of Micah 6:8 to touch our hearts and spur us into action is undiminished. “The LORD God has told us what is right and what he demands:

‘See that justice is done, let mercy be your first concern, and humbly obey your God.’

(CEV) This verse rings like a manifesto.

Why would this be our manifesto? Because we, as believers, have taken on God’s name as our own. We are His representatives, His ambassadors, His children. What we do matters. Our actions signal to the world who God is. It is therefore imperative that our message truly reflects His character.

This lesson has shown us that our God is full of a love that is barely comprehensible to us. He is never fatigued by the clamouring needs of this broken world. Rather, His heart yearns to set all things right. He is deeply concerned that justice is done. He has His eye on those most often cut off from it.

And this is the work that He calls us to do. This is how He asks us to reveal Himself to the world. To preach good news, to bind up the brokenhearted, to tend to the needs of others, and to ensure – as far as we are able – that justice is done. To be like Father, like child.

When we concern ourselves with what God cares for, we are richly rewarded. We know God more deeply for ourselves. And we have the indescribable experience of bringing joy to the downcast. We show those like Abdul, so often unseen and cast aside, that they are, in fact, *seen*. That they are precious. That they are loved. Not only by us, but especially by their Maker and Redeemer.

Today, Abdul's smile is infectious. In his new wheelchair, he doesn't hesitate to approach anyone with a challenge. "*Let's race!*" he shouts, as he charges forward.

Abdul's joy is due to God's people doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with Him. May we never, ever tire of doing God's work. Hopefully one day, we will meet Abdul in Heaven, standing on his own two legs, his hands on his hips as he challenges us, "*Let's race!*" And we will race with him to our Heavenly Father's waiting arms.