

THE BENCH

Every morning, around ten o'clock or so, she would slowly make her way to the bench in the little park next to the church. Her daughter would bring her there for the day. The large trees offered lovely shade and a cool refuge from the warm summer days that these were. By the third morning that week, I finally noticed that she had a walker in front of her, and that she had only one leg. At her age, in her seventies it seemed, that must have been a very limiting thing.

I was there in Poland that week with a short term mission team of about fifteen altogether. We were helping the local church in this city to paint the building they were using for services, and to clean up a bit in the park that surrounded it. While I was working on other projects those days, I didn't get to (or take time to, really) spend a time with this lady on the bench, but I did get to observe someone who did. And a friendship was being built—however temporary our limited time there made it. This connection was one that took very little—just a bit of time and availability, and the willingness to actually touch someone.



Quite often during the week, Mrs. P from our team could be seen sitting on the bench with this lonely lady, holding her hand, and talking with her through one of the translators who was helping us while we were there. Mrs. P could also be seen giving her hugs, patting her shoulder, and loving on her as completely as possible.

I don't remember much of this lady's story to be honest, except the impression that it was somewhat heavy and a bit sad. But I do remember something she said at the end of the week, when she and her daughter stopped by on our last evening to give Mrs. P the freshly baked cake they had made that afternoon. She told Mrs. P that in all her years no one had ever touched her like she had—a touch full of love and hope. That was what she needed, and that was what was gifted to her, even though most would shy away from the contact.



Perhaps it only takes a small bit of time, and the willingness to be there, to encourage a lonely someone. While it might not seem like there is much you could do in any given situation, the sheer need of those around us is great. And you just might find that you will be abundantly blessed in the process. Be encouraged to bless someone in need of just a little bit of your time, and who could benefit from holding your hand for just a little while.

HUGS AND KISSES... FOR THE HOMELESS

As we head deeper into winter, the basic needs of many who face the bitterness of the cold weather become more blatantly clear.

HUGS AND KISSES seeks to share God's love with those in need of warmth by donating handmade scarves (hugs) and hats (kisses) to those in need.

This month, a donation of colorful hugs and kisses was made to a local homeless ministry, who have then given them out over the past few weekends. And just in time, it seems, as temperatures have dropped considerably.

To enable us to continue to help and encourage local, national, and international ministries that already seek to serve those fighting the cold, we need help!



Would you be willing to join this effort and make hugs and/or kisses that we could then get to those who need them? Let us know...

THE ENCOURAGEMENT PROJECT is run solely with the financial gifts and donations of those of you who are interested in helping and encouraging others through this ministry. We greatly appreciate your willingness to be a part of this team.

Gifts of any amount are helpful! Monthly (preferred), once in a while, or one-time gifts will go toward seeing believers encouraged, and those in need helped.

Checks made payable to "The Encouragement Project" can be mailed to:
The Encouragement Project
PO Box 452
Alpharetta, GA 30009

If you prefer to set up a monthly gift, please let us know and we will send you the banking information.

The Encouragement Project is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. All gifts are tax deductible.

CHILDRENS BOOKS

One of the organizations we are helping to encourage is *THE CRADDOCK CENTER*, which is located in Cherry Log, Georgia.

This incredible ministry in a tiny town in the North Georgia Mountains is surrounded by tremendous needs of all kinds.

The main outreach of The Craddock Center, which was started by a pastor about 10 years ago, is to gift new and like-new books to pre-school and elementary children in the region. While kids in upper income neighborhoods have an average of 199 age appropriate books in their homes, the average number of books that low income families (an abundance of which can be found in this and surrounding mountain counties) have is 2. As you can see by the drastic statistics, this is a much needed effort that will go a long way towards helping the children and families in this area.

We at The Encouragement Project are collecting new and gently used children's books to take to the center to support and encourage their efforts. If you would like to be a part of this by donating any number of books for the Center, do let us know (our contact info is below).

More information about the Craddock Center can be found at: www.craddockcenter.org



CONTACT US... WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

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