

MisSion CriTikal

#12 – Beyond Beautiful

“WHAT'S HAPPENED TO OUR TENT?!”

Lenny sat in front of the tent with tears in his eyes. And why not? He was the teen that discovered the torn old tent in the town dump and talked everyone into making it the 'building' for Mission Critikal to reach out to the little village below.

The honest truth though, was his heavy disappointment when the extent of the rips and other defects were fully seen. He'd been encouraged watching Lyla teach all the village children in the Story Spot at the side of the tent. Lenny admitted to himself, he'd been one of the teens that more than once had agreed **“Ya Gotta Do The Best With Whatcha Got!”** But his tear-filled eyes scanned the tent in front of him and told the clouds, “This is beyond beautiful – it's beyond imagination.”

It wasn't until two days later that Lyla and her younger brother Willy showed up and explained all that had happened, at least up until now. It was largely due to Mama: Willy's mama.

Lyla explained that during two days last week that Lenny and his teen friend Daenum (“Dae”) weren't there, Mama, Lyla, Willy, and another adult village lady went to work. They wanted to show their thankfulness to the missionary teens for all their hard work and love for the children – their children.

Mama and the village lady, Ruth, had cut out patches to cover each one of the many rips on the tent. The poles inside the tent were temporarily lowered enough so all the roof patches could be installed. Lenny and everyone was really grateful to God for patching the holes but

that was only the beginning.

The beauty is first noticed by the material used to make the patches. Somewhere Mama and Ruth had found some cloth like a kitchen tablecloth. It would be a little waterproof for a while, but after all, Ya gotta do the best with whatcha got!

The patches were held in place with thin strands of a piece electrical cable, that up till now, Willy had just been practicing

making knots and weaving little pads. The patches were poked with a few holes made by a sharpened rusty nail. Outside the tent, Ruth fed the wire strand through the hole in the patch and on through the tent. Inside, Mama poked the wire back out the tent and patch to Ruth. The process was repeated all around each patch.

Maybe part of the beauty of the tent repair was noticed by Lyla. Working on the patching, the two ladies began singing little work chants, with a bit of a smile. Lyla had to walk away from the tent and get a couple deep breaths and thank Him, beyond the clouds. Lyla couldn't remember the last time she heard her mama sing. The teen thought she remembered one of mama's long-ago chants that said singin' is the best medicine, and lightens heavy loads.

Lenny stood to his feet and walked toward a patch that really grabbed his heart. On the front of the mission tent was a large patch that didn't cover any rips. It was the shape of a cross! With the same hand he'd just wiped a tear away, he touched the cross patch. His eyes saw the red in the tablecloth pattern and thought of the blood of the cross shed for his own sins. He saw the white parts of the patch that reminded him of the color of his heart after the blood had washed away all his sins. The blue in the pattern reminded him to point his eyes upward and see the one and only Creator that watches and anxiously waits for each of His children to ask for provisions and pay Him back with deep love and service.

Part of the beauty of Mission Critikal is seen when the children finish their weekly Story Time with Lyla, and almost reverently follow her, single file around the tent and point out all the beautiful patches. A few of the older children would also quiz the younger ones as to what each of the colors stood for. They'd made their own “God-Game.” Try it yourself.

One question no one knows to ask, “Why is the tablecloth in Mama's kitchen so much smaller than it used to be? Does God have folks just aching to know how they can serve Him, with their little?