

MisSion CriTikal

#23 – Teens 'n Toes

Yet again the branches that outlined the Story Spot at the side of the mission tent had to be widened. More village children were regularly coming and enjoying every lesson and story.

Lyla was so happy to have her teen friend Dedee helping with the Sunday afternoon story times – especially the messy agenda planned for today.

Everyone removed their shoes and sandals. Part of Lyla's lesson stressed the similarity of the children's feet. The big toes were in the center for balance and fast moving forward. The small toes on the side allowed heavy loads in soft sandy soil and made for quick turns running.

Tickling the feet also emphasized the sensitive nerve endings that stimulated areas all over the body. God's design of our feet is beauty for sure. Lyla and Dedee tried their best to create some footprints on cardboard using mud, something like detectives taking fingerprints. The footprinting didn't work very good, although you couldn't tell it by the fun the children had, getting muddy from the knees down.

While Dedee led the happy children in playing their 'Jesus Loves Me' God game, Daenum noticed Lyla at the back of the group with a sad look on her face. He slowly walked over and sat down next to her, facing the children. In a soft tone without looking at her, he asked, "How's it goin'?"

Her reply stunned him. "I've failed the children. I know I have. And I feel like going home right now and hiding from everybody. What makes this all the more sickening is that I tried so hard 'cuz of my love for the children. I just can't make any sense of it all." Something in Dae's mind told him to remain silent, and let her get all of her hurt out.

"And Dae, then there's Dedee helping. I mean, I love so much that she's helping, since our little group is growing and she seems to be enjoying it all as much as I do. I wanted to be a real leader to her. It would be great if I could show her right off that I knew what I was doing. But today I proved just the opposite with her."

In Daenum's heart, he understood the disappointment she

was feeling. He'd been there many times. He was an expert on having pity parties – long ones and short ones. His carefully chosen words were, "Lyla, God loves each of us so much He often calls us to examine how and why we do things - especially things for Him. He guides our examination on our own hearts. Many times it's not too tough to see areas of our attitudes that aren't really focused where they should be."

"I hate to admit those heart exams that have shown me I've taken my focus off Him and onto myself. My words and thoughts seem to begin way too much with 'I this' and 'I that'. 'Me' and 'mine' words crowd out God-honoring attitudes and actions, and with that Satan gets a big victory."

They were interrupted by Dedee rushing back to the two teens and letting Lyla know she was needed. It was a perfect time for the children to have the closing Story Spot prayer before everyone headed home, knocking the dried mud off, as they walked.

Dae could tell that Lyla's prayer didn't have the level of praise and heavenward joy that it usually did. After the amen, the children began leaving. It was Dedee's little brother Timmy that went up to Lyla and began talking to her.

From the distance Dae saw Lyla and the little Timmy kneel down and pray together. They continued speaking with eyes closed and head bowed. In a moment they both stood up and hugged. Timmy headed for home with a little skipping in his step.

Just as Lyla was starting for home, Dae handed her a little slip of paper with a verse on it. Because she wasn't a very good reader, Mama helped to read the verse that was about feet; about beauty – it was actually about beautiful feet."

The words were, "*How beautiful ...are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation...*" (Isaiah 52:7).

So often when our spirituality gets muddy, our loving Savior stands ready with fresh forgiveness, blessings, and Heaven's heart cleansing, our words can't begin to describe.