



FAR REACHING MINISTRIES



FIRST TOY & HOT DOG

When I was a child, Christmas was always the most exciting day of the year for my brothers and me, especially growing up in Germany. Germany was a beautiful country, that was not only picturesque, but had the look of a time gone past. Many buildings were hundreds of years old. Where we lived, there were two large churches in the center of the city, one Catholic and one Protestant. This was true of many small German cities—the buildings were very grand and gothic. It had a beauty that would cause you to just stop, stare and ponder who built such structures. We even had a cobble stone street that was said to have been built by the Roman Empire. Buildings were decorated and you could smell Christmas in the air from the forest, snow and the many bratwurst stands. At least, for a child growing up in Germany, that was

**“MOST KIDS IN
MEXICO JUST WANT
A HOT DOG FOR
CHRISTMAS”**

how I perceived it. A block away from my house was an abandoned castle, or what was left of it. It had one tower, one wall and the dungeon still stood. There were irons where prisoners would have been locked in. This allowed for many hours of play for me and my brothers. My father went to great lengths to make Christmas a special occasion for us. He always decorated the house and had Christmas music playing all day. My mother always had dessert in the oven, whether it was Christmas cookies, cakes or fudge. When Christmas Day came, we kids could not wait to get up in the morning. We always woke our parents early, sometimes to be sent back to bed and told to wait. Ten minutes later, we would be back again, and eventually they would give in. We always had a feast of turkey and ham, along with all the fixings. Toys in Germany were far better than

those in the United States. There would be castles, knights and toy soldiers, along with swords and shields for us to wear and pretend that we were knights. When we got our knights' swords and shields, my brothers and I would be off to the abandoned castle to play for hours. We only returned for more Christmas cookies before we left to do battle at the castle again. We were off to fight the enemy hordes who were besieging our city, or at least that was how it was in our imagination. When we were not at the castle, we would go sledding for hours.

Times have changed from when I was a boy. Many families have much more money now, than when we were children. Toys are not just for a Christmas and birthday event anymore. Children often get far more beyond what they need. They do not even wake up early anymore because they are so used to having so much. The stockings that were once immediately attacked by children to find candy, nuts, and fresh fruit are not even investigated by kids anymore.

While we in the U.S. have so much, other countries such as Mexico and Africa have very little. When you ask a child in Uganda or South Sudan what they want for



about 500 poor children. They try to give a warm blanket, a meal, and a small toy along with some candy and used

clothing. Some years they have not been able to even provide the toys, and what they have given, has often been used. The reason the blanket is the first gift is that several newborns in Ensenada died, in previous years, because they did not have a blanket to keep them warm.

Bigtha told me that when she was about 11 years old, she started to work to help provide food and things for her family. When she turned 13 years old, she got a fake birth certificate so she could provide for herself what a young girl needs. The first thing on her list was a Barbie doll; however, the food needs of the family were so great, it took six months before

she had enough extra to purchase the Barbie doll. When she got it, she had to hide it, because every little girl would want to play with it, and it would be destroyed. She said that while it was a great joy to have it, it was bittersweet because she could not enjoy it with other children.



Christmas, it is very common to hear, "I had meat last Christmas. I would like to have meat this Christmas, or a chicken."

In Mexico, we support a missionary couple, Bigtha and her husband Jorge, who are both Mexican citizens. They save all year to try and provide a Christmas for



LONGING FOR A TOY

Last year, we provided many dolls and toys for children in Mexico. This year, we want to provide a doll for every young girl and toy cars for the small boys, along with soccer balls for the older boys, and an appropriate gift for teenage girls. Along with these items, we want to provide a new blanket, candy, and a nice Christmas meal. For most of the children they just want a hot dog for Christmas because they never get them. I estimate this will cost about \$30 for each child.

I was recently in Uganda, traveling to South Sudan, when my wife, Vicky, asked me to stop at the boarding school to see Given (which is short for Forgiven) and his sister, Lavina. They are the children of Thomas, a chaplain, who was killed almost three years ago. Given always tells everyone that I am his father. Vicky said that if we stop at the boarding school, it will thrill him. Given talked about me so much that the teachers thought that I was made up in his imagination. Whenever he would see a plane, car or even a swimming pool he would tell them

that I owned it. So, I stopped and bought them both a toy, but when I gave the toys to them, the other children looked on with such longing. Probably none of them had ever had a new toy. One little boy just dropped down and put his head in his hands. So, I called all the kids together, and told them not to worry, that I would bring toys for all of them within a couple of weeks. This was a problem because there were over 220 girls and about 160 boys. I called Brian and Jill, who run the church and the guesthouse, and said that I need 220 dolls and 160 cars quickly. I also let them know that they should get a few extra, because you know how kids are: when toys or candy show up, so do they. We were able to find and purchase these items over the next 10 days. The children were thrilled—for them this was Christmas.

When we did the Mexico Christmas outreach this past year, one little girl, who was so tiny, was just smiling from ear to ear because she had never had a new doll. It touched all of us and made us realize the effort was worthwhile. We plan to provide toys for as many children as possible, from the poorest of families. For most, it will be their first new toy ever.



PROBABLY THE FIRST TOY HE HAS EVER RECEIVED

We are asking for as many of our donors who are able, to give for the children's Christmas outreach this year. For \$30 you can provide for one child a blanket, toy, Christmas candy and a Christmas meal. For

TOYS & HOT DOGS FOR CHRISTMAS



For many of the children we have worked with in Mexico, when they are asked what they want for Christmas, they respond, "I want a hot dog!" Most have never received a toy before.

We are preparing for our Mexico children's outreach, for the poorest of children, where we will provide a blanket, a toy, candy, and a meal for Christmas.

This will cost approximately \$30 per child. Our goal is to provide for 1000 children this year. To be part of this opportunity, kindly notate **"TOYS & HOT DOGS"** on the enclosed gift card along with your donation.

SEEKING PASTORS & TEACHERS



If you are a pastor or teacher, who has a heart for the chaplains, we are inviting you to be part of instructing our eleventh class of chaplains. Beginning in October 2019, and continuing through October 2020, we are looking to fill two-week teaching intervals. This opportunity includes training our men for the spiritual and physical battles they will face as

they carry the Gospel across South Sudan. Please contact Ed Gauntt at (951) 677-4474 for more detailed information.

\$300 you can provide for ten children. For \$3,000 you can provide for 100 children. If someone does have the ability, and can donate \$30,000, we can provide for over 1,000 children. I promise that 100 percent will be used for the kids, with no administrative fees taken out. While most kids in the U.S. will probably not be waking up early for Christmas, the children of Mexico will probably not be able to sleep the night before.

Wes Bentley

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