

SHAPING DESTINY

Child Sponsor

Fall 2014

Newsletter

Cultural Richness



Learn about some of our sponsors and partners joining us for a few weeks this past summer in Cameroon. We love having teams join us for short term trips that allow them to experience the beautiful culture of Africa!

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Bible College, Cameroon Style



This summer, Dr. Acha had the privilege of teaching both American and Cameroon students more about basic orphan care principles, spiritual formation, and living a godly life. All these courses are available online for you to take also through Austin Bible College!

www.austinbiblecollege.com

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Being a Bridge for Our Children



Read a current update about the progress of our orphans, as well as the amazing growth within Shaping Destiny Ministries.

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“Making disciples and serving the poor.”



A Summer of Purpose

The air was thick in my lungs as we stepped off the plane into the Douala airport. It was a familiar scent: humidity mixed with dirt and burning garbage, reminding me exactly where we are. After 26 hours of flying through the open skies, attempting to sleep while sitting upright, and learning to enjoy packaged airplane meals, we finally arrived in our beloved Africa – poor, muddy, and beautiful as ever. I glanced over at Shaping Destiny's director, Dr. Kenneth Acha, as we walked down the quiet corridor leading to the immigration checkpoint. He looked tired, yet determined. This is the work God has called us to and we moved forward, confident and eager for what He was about to do among us in the summer months. This summer was an exciting time for the Shaping Destiny family with many opportunities, caring for poor children and discipling young believers, visible just beyond the airport doors.

From June through August, Dr. Acha and I, one of his interns, spent time working with our Shaping Destiny team in Cameroon. We are devoted to furthering God's work in the ministry and many new things have been happening. While there, we were checking in with the local staff and children, ensuring that the work on the ground has been going well. Many of the children who have been raised by Shaping Destiny for years are almost grown now; taking final exams for high school, working their own summer jobs and preparing to leave our program to become independent, contributing adults in their own land.

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Child sponsor, Ryan, entertaining Shaping Destiny children with pictures of his family back home, a lesson in Angry Birds, and an introduction to "selfies".

Cultural Richness

Earlier this year, it came to our attention that some of Shaping Destiny's child sponsors and partners were interested in visiting Cameroon. They were eager to understand and experience the cultural ways of life and customs for the children they sponsor, as well as see firsthand all that God has been doing through this ministry they so strongly support. It was a chance to be fully immersed in a wonderful land and have a viable way to truly connect with fellow believers who are devoting their lives to the work of God. We had a number of supporters wanting to join us for 1-2 week trips, enthusiastic to learn about unique people, try new foods, and get a better grasp on what life was like in a very different world.

We were ecstatic at such a wonderful opening to show how gracious God has been in our work. It is not often that the Cameroon staff gets to fellowship with American partners and personally share all the growth Shaping Destiny has undergone since its creation. Jackie and Jeanifa, our head managers at Shaping Destiny, welcomed them with open arms and were happy to show them their country. The short-termers were kept busy...

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Dr. Acha was also offering foundational Bible training and introductory orphan care courses when in country, following the heartbeat of our ministry to make disciples and serve the poor as we partner with believers both local and abroad. I was working with our orphanage managers to lead a team of short-term volunteers from America for a few months showing them the lifestyles, the people, and the work that Shaping Destiny has been doing for the last nine years. The group consisted of young American students interested in learning more about orphan care and maturing spiritually through Glory Bible College, the Cameroon branch of one of our partners, Austin Bible College, which offers spiritual and practical training for students interested in Bible training, evangelism, and orphan care. We also had some of Shaping Destiny's partners and child sponsors visit for a few weeks who wanted the opportunity to see and experience the beautiful culture of Cameroon.

God blessed us daily throughout our trip. Everyone remained in good health and high spirits as they were challenged and transformed through their exchanges with a distant land. The Shaping Destiny children were all happy and enjoying their summer holiday, visiting friends and family or working small jobs to earn spending money and learn responsibility. It was also awesome to see a wide range of students, coming from different backgrounds, perspectives, and countries, all sitting together to attend the Bible training classes. There were many different aspects and opportunities intertwined throughout the trip, but one thing was certain: Christ is moving in Shaping Destiny and His spirit is teaching us how to partner together and grow for the glory of God.





Cross-cultural friendships blossoming over the summer.

Glorifying God Through the Bible College

It was 4:00pm on a Monday afternoon in Cameroon, West Africa. Among the busy traffic sounds along a rocky, pothole-filled road, the sound of worship could be heard rising to heaven. It was the sound of the redeemed, rising from the African plain. It was a mixture of different songs, from different countries, all increasing to praise God for the goodness He has shown to them. It was Glory Bible College students, with different languages and tongues, in one voice, proclaiming that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Five days a week, for eight weeks total, about fifteen students, both Cameroonian and American, met together in a small office building with the hopes of maturing spiritually and practically through Biblical disciplines shared and taught by Dr. Acha. They learned things such as how to experience God, how to discern His calling on their life, and the best practices of poverty alleviation. Three American students travelled abroad for this specific purpose and sat side-by-side with other believers from a very different culture, but who also longed to grow in discipleship and develop the character of Christ. This follows one of the basic principles our Bible College teaches, that no one should undermine nor overtake their brothers and sisters in another country, but rather, partner together, each culture playing their own part, to offer the best care and discipleship for the poor.

I sat down to interview a few students, from both nations, and was greatly encouraged by their testimony of progression and strength in their faith as they studied and matured from the teachings. First, I spoke with Sunny Sidman, a young girl from Portland, Oregon, who was volunteering abroad with Shaping Destiny after her eight weeks of training was complete.

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Interview with Sunny:

How has your stay in Cameroon been so far?

SS: I love it here! It gives me a chance to get acclimated to the country before I start volunteering.

What has been the most rewarding experience in class?

SS: The course on harmful help, inspired by the book "When Helping Hurts", has been very useful to me. It has helped me see the best ways to Biblically alleviate poverty in a way that focuses on the individual and allows them to help themselves.

How do you like taking classes with other Africans and not just Americans?

SS: I've enjoyed taking the class with Africans. It's been good to hear their insights and questions and it's another way I have been learning about their culture. I've made many great connections and have gotten to create friendships with many local people through the class.

How have you seen your spiritual life grow since beginning this training course?

SS: I have definitely seen my spiritual life and relationship with God grow since starting! The class on spiritual formation is specifically teaching me about meditating and growing in my relationship with God. I am seeing my time with Him become more fruitful and intimate since beginning this learning experience.

Learn more about training at
www.austinbiblecollege.com



Sunny Sidman and Shaping Destiny intern, Stephanie Eitzen, pose for pictures after the baptism of a few students in the Bible College.

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Sunny and I developed a great friendship during my stay in Cameroon and I am excited to see her advance in her relationship with God as she willingly gives herself to serve the poor. Although she is still trying to figure out where God is calling her in life, she is certain that Cameroon is where He has brought her for this season and has found confidence and peace in the midst of a life-changing progression.

Since the training was mixed with multicultural students, there was an amazingly exceptional aspect to this course that has never existed in the Bible College thus far. Having a multitude of cultures, ages, and perspectives allowed for a greater understanding to be expressed. I spent some time talking with one of the Cameroon students, Eunice Ache, who had been undergoing great spiritual growth since attending the training course through Glory Bible College. She was happy to share with me how much of a blessing this class has been in her life.

Both Eunice and Sunny are perfect examples of believers who are benefitting greatly from the training Shaping Destiny is offering through its partner Bible College. It is wonderful to see people from different nations learning and growing together for the glory of God. The Holy Spirit was leading Dr. Acha as he taught each day and guided the students to live righteous lives, remaining obedient to God and submissive to His will in their lives. Shaping Destiny is marching forward following their mission to to serve the poor, orphans and widows alike, and also to make disciples of many nations and empower them to then turn and empower their brothers and sisters around them.

Interview with Eunice:

What has been the most impactful thing you have learned in class so far?

EA: Learning about peacemaking, through the book "Peacemaker" by Ken Sande as well as the teaching by Dr. Acha, has really impacted me. Total surrender and absolute dependence to Christ has helped me to surrender to His will and let go of my own.

What made you take the training course?

EA: I heard this course trained people in the basics of orphan care and spiritual growth. I wanted to build myself and grow in the Lord, as well as care for others spiritually.

How have you seen growth in your spiritual life since beginning this training?

EA: In fact, I thank God for this training because it has made me to meditate on the Word more than ever and grow in submission. I now seek to do everything according to His will, not my own, and that is new to me.

This is your first time studying alongside Americans, how was the experience for you?

EA: When I came in, I was unsure I would be able to keep up with these people [the Americans]. But it has been a wonderful experience, teaching me how to interact and learn with people from other cultures who I used to be intimidated by, but now see as sisters and brothers in Christ.

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A Bridge Over Troubled Water

Since 2005, Shaping Destiny has been reaching out to the orphans and needy in the surrounding area through spiritual guidance, nurturing love, and hope for a better future than they ever thought possible. We have always been seeking to learn better ways to care for orphans as our own children, following the call God has placed in our heart from the beginning. Along the way, we have been open to altering our methods or considering new and different ideas, but have always remained true to our Biblical standards of discipleship and sacrificial love. This year is a thrilling time for the Shaping Destiny family as our ministry and children are going to new places we have never been before; our foster care program is flourishing, our children are growing up and finishing school, and we are preparing to select newly qualified children into our sponsorship program as we send the grown ones out into the world.

Our Board is constantly exploring better practices for orphan care so that we can ensure we are giving the best attention to help develop these children. We began a foster care program a few years ago that took off immediately within the village. Dr. Acha composed a letter explaining the Biblical and ethical importance of a community taking responsibility in their own land and then one of our local managers went around the area, with the letter, inviting families to join in God's work of caring for orphans. We explained to them that a loving home is the best place to put an abandoned child, not an institutional orphanage setting. We encouraged them that if they would provide food, nurturing affection, Christian guidance, and cultural direction, we would supply the financial support for a public education and health care. Shaping Destiny's mission has always been to stand in the gap, to act as a bridge, allowing a child living in hopelessness, poverty, and fear to cross over into a life filled with love, hope, and strength. Within a matter of days, we had over 50 families eagerly...



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...learning how to cook local dishes, visiting the orphanage, playing with the kids, and spending a lot of quality time with the locals – all part of experiencing a typical day in the life of a Cameroonian.

Chris and Christie Otts, a couple who had been sponsoring 18 year-old Yanick, came to spend one week of immersion in Cameroon. They learned a bit of the Pidgin-English language, spent a day at the farm with a local mama, and had the chance to meet Yanick, who they had been praying for faithfully and encouraging through hand-written letters. At the end of her trip, Christie told the staff, "I've learned so much! I'm sure I will spend weeks processing what I have experienced. I've been stretched to really absorb the cultural experience and try to understand the mindsets and ways of thinking."

Dr. Acha said it best, "Our cultures form who we are and the best way to understand a person is to understand their culture. The great thing about culture is that it can be learned through a process of socialization. When you socialize with people, living daily among them, you can learn more about them than you ever possibly could through written letters or books on a shelf. The length of the trip was too short a time for anyone to become *part of* the culture, but that was not our goal. Our goal was genuine exposure and experience of the culture as equals, learning and growing together in the Lord."

When you meet someone across the world and learn to love them as you would your own people, you find yourself never really feeling like you are at home again. That is part of the richness you gain when you know and love people in more than one place. That is what our partners and sponsors had the privilege of experiencing as they spent a few weeks in unity with people who are now considered their Cameroon family.

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...respond, opening up their homes to qualified orphans. We were amazed!

Since that time, more than half of Shaping Destiny children have lived and thrived with foster families and within the recent months, we have moved even more into a similar environment, all the while experiencing positive results. We have seen firsthand the beneficial impact on a child to have a family to call their own rather than living in a large group setting with a few aunties caring for all of them at once. During the first week of Dr. Acha's stay, he and the Cameroon staff gathered all the children in our program to eat together, fellowship as one, and express how they have been doing so far. There is a noticeable increase in their responsibility, a growth in their gratitude, a rise in their self-worth, and a decrease in operating cost — allowing us to reach out to more children with our limited financial means.

Not only are our children blooming happily, they are growing in age as well. Many of the original orphans who joined Shaping Destiny years ago as children are now approaching adulthood and graduation from school. The older ones just completed what is known in Cameroon as the GCE (General Certificate of Education) or as we in the States would know as the SATs. Over the summer, they waited anxiously for the results, which were released mid-August. Four out of the six older children who took the GCEs passed with above average grades! Everyone, staff and children alike, were rejoicing and relieved that all the hard work, early morning study time, and stress finally paid off with incredible success. The rest of holiday break was spent either visiting nearby relatives, learning responsibility and the discipline of saving money by working odd jobs, or happily remaining with foster families, bonding together and blessing their guardians by helping out around the home. They are all back in school now, grateful for the opportunity to learn, study, and further themselves in life.

The Shaping Destiny staff and Board of Directors, who have sacrificed their time and resources and labored diligently for years to raise all these kids, are now watching as proud parents while their children approach adulthood, rise up in the Lord, and flourish in unity with the families who have adopted and nurtured them in better ways than our limited staff ever could, though they tried. As we begin to cycle out our first group of almost-grown children, Jackie and Jeanifa will start going out in the community to find a new set of needy orphans, who God will bring into our lives desperate for affection, discipleship, and a home.

We thank you, our supporters, our encouragers, and our brothers and sisters in Christ, for all the prayerful sustenance and financial generosity that has enabled us to come this far. We ask that you would continue to join hands with us as we spread our arms wider still to embrace even more children into our family. One day, they, too, will cross the Shaping Destiny Bridge into a life of wholeness, made new in Jesus and full of hope, freedom, and confidence in the Lord.

Our Vision

To be a bridge that God uses to move the poor from a life of hopelessness to a life of hope and joy in Christ.

Shaping Destiny

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