

Judy:

Our story starts some 30 years ago on a short term mission trip to the country of Haiti. We were there to build a church which would also function as a local school and community building for a small country village. While there, we worked with Christian World Outreach. It was a relatively new ministry committed to educating the poor and bringing the story of Jesus and his redemptive hope to the people of Haiti. Bill returned to Haiti several times on additional projects and we began to build a long term relationship with Christian World Outreach, their family and staff. It was a time which helped to shape our World View.

4 years ago Bill took an early retirement and after a couple of years of rest we had begun to ask God where we might be able to contribute to the work that God was doing. We placed no restrictions on what God would ask us to do. We only asked that if there was something, he would help us to see it.

BILL:

When the earth quake hit Haiti a few years ago we called Christian World Outreach to see how their staff was doing and to see how we could be helpful. Their staff was spared and their buildings had little damage. Many staff had experienced the loss of loved ones and the pain and shock was considerable. Through the efforts of personal friends and Churches, including

Fair Haven Ministries, we were able to fill a container of clothing, hygiene supplies and other items that Christian World Outreach distributed through their school.

During this time we became aware of the work in Burkina Fasso and the startup of the School of Opportunity. We did not think much of it at the time. However as we would talk and pray we became aware that this project was either on Judy's mind or on mine. Over a period of more than a year, conversations with Christian World Outreach and some very close friends and advisors, we became aware that God was inviting us to be champions for this school.

Judy:

The reason we tell this story is that a short term mission trip 30 years ago was the connecting point to the project in Burkina Fasso that we are now a part of. Over the years, Christian World Outreach, through their faithful work in Haiti was asked to assist a church in Burkina Fasso and the church's efforts to provide education for children. The country is the second poorest in Africa and has an illiteracy rate of over 70%. The church provides a Christian education and the school is sanctioned by the State. Burkina Fasso is a male dominated culture and boys are given preference in education and livelihood opportunities. As a State sanctioned school there are requirements for the students to test out or wash out after 2

years. Those who pass the grade go on and those who do not go back to their villages. The girls who come from poor villages have a very difficult time because of travel, family responsibilities and chores. By the time many of them are finished with their daily routine it is too dark to study. They have no electricity by which to read. Many are unable to pass the grade and wash out. For girls that means they are a financial burden to their families and most are given away as a wife to become little more than a concubine and labor source for some man in a Muslim culture. The typical age of these girls is 13 to 20, some younger. It is these girls that the school we are building is focused on.

Bill:

This story has broken our hearts. We can only imagine how we would feel if we had to give our daughter away under these conditions. The video you just saw shows happy hopeful girls. When most of them come to the school their self-esteem is so low that they cannot look you in the eye as you talk with them.

Through the School of Opportunity, girls that would go home and have little hope for a life of self-worth will receive a 3 year Christian education in sewing, agriculture, tourism, cooking, and cosmetics. With this education they will bring economy to their villages and families. They will be able to support

themselves and not be a burden to their parents. This will give them opportunity to marry under healthy circumstances.

Judy:

The girls will be exposed to the love of Christ and his followers for the 3 years they are in the School of Opportunity. It is estimated that each girl will affect the lives of about 50 people in their families and villages with their education.

Last year the school was able to do a trial run with 8 girls. This year there are 20 girls. Our next project is to build a dormitory that will give the school the capacity to house up to 200 girls. Each girl will be educated in a Christian environment. The dormitory will cost about 300 thousand dollars American. Other projects will be school buildings for cooking, cosmetology, teacher and staff housing, and an additional Well. We are estimating the total cost for the campus to be 1 million dollars American.

Bill:

One of the things we haven't mentioned is that Judy and I asked God to allow us to be a part of something bigger than ourselves. We welcome your participation in any way God encourages you to do so.

We believe our story is your story. We have been inspired by the others we have heard here this month. We share their over

whelmed feelings and emotions. Even so we are encouraged to reach out and do for one, what we wished we could do for everyone. We hope you have found your story. We hope that some will actually join us and in doing so find a story to tell.

Bob:

Went along as a friend of Bill to assess the work:

Chief gave daughter to President of CWO/ Chiefs gave land to build the school campus on/ Scars / children caring for children / chickens given as a gift of hospitality / elders showing respect to older elders /excitement commitment of the staff missionaries / medical van /

Bill

Judy and I hope to take a group to Burkina Fasso early next year and if you think this might become your story to we would love to invite you along with us.