

Pelagie Needed Blood - 2005

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PELAGIE NEEDED BLOOD

Most days, I handle it okay when a child dies as long as I know we did everything possible. But, when they die in my arms, it's just hard. Most recently, it was 1-year old Pelagie. I sometimes wish I had walked away when I saw her mother crying, approaching me with this very sick child. It was already 7:00 pm and I had just stopped by the hospital to get meds to another child. But, the doctors told this woman her child needed blood and without it, there was nothing they could do. So, I turned to Boris, one of my workers, and asked, "Is there anything we can do?" He responded, "I'll give my blood."

Of course there was no lab tech available at this hour to take the blood, so we had to call someone to go find the emergency tech. We were informed if there were at least 5 men, he would come and do blood tests. Well, I've never met this woman before and of course she had come about 15 miles by bike alone with the child, so where were we going to find 5 men willing to give their blood? Within 5 minutes, 2 men were there – they had heard a child needed blood and were there to give. Fifteen minutes later a group of about 8 men came saying they heard a child needed blood and they also were there to give. How the word got out, I don't know, but I was encouraged as I'm sure was the mother.

At this point, everyone is assuming I'm responsible for this child's care. Knowing that a white woman's involvement tends to get the medical staff to DO SOMETHING, I stayed. If I hadn't been there, the child would have been left to die without effort. Maybe they know best? But I have this problem/blessing of knowing God is really BIG and He can heal children. I believe prayer is powerful and 'in Jesus' name' miracles can and do happen. So, I stay.

By now Pelagie occasionally whimpers. As her mother hands her to me, she is like a rag doll. Her eyes are already rolling back; so there was anxiety in the air as we all waited patiently (or not) for the 'emergency' lab tech to arrive. I prayed like I've never prayed before. That's all I could do. Those of you who read my story about Lucy have heard this before. I held Pelagie and prayed and rubbed her hands and kept repeating her name as if all of this would keep her alive. The tech arrived and slowly began testing blood while I just kept on praying. I kept thinking there must be a reason why I happened to be there for this woman, so surely Pelagie would live.

Well, Pelagie did not live. After the lab tech had taken 7 blood samples, he announced that none of them were a clean enough match and we would have to continue in the morning. It was as if Pelagie heard because not a minute later, she gasped and died.

I was left with this woman and this baby, surrounded by a bunch of men I don't know. Boris had

left before she died to get the meds that had been prescribed. Of course the mother broke down. As is typical here, the men all started yelling at her to stop. I know just enough of the Moret language to know they were telling her she needed to stop crying in front of the white woman. They kept throwing the cover over Pelagie's face. But her mother just kept sobbing and removing the cover. I was so thankful when Boris returned. Eventually, a couple men from the woman's village arrived on motos to carry her and Pelagie home for the burial which would take place that night. As is custom here, the men would bury Pelagie. Her mother would not be allowed near the site.

WHY?

The honest truth is I questioned why? Why didn't the prayers work? We were all trying so hard to save this one – why couldn't He? Is my faith too small? How will I trust Him to heal the next one when so many die? And, why do I question, "Why?"

By the way, the child I happened to be visiting when I met Pelagie and her mother – his name was Madi. His grandmother had come to me asking for help about a week before. He was severely malnourished, so pitiful, and yet, so darn cute. He died 2 days later as did the little baby girl in the same room with him. Her mother had just asked me to pray with her the day before. And then another, baby Kader, died that same morning. And, finally, I cried and didn't stop for 2 days.

Don't worry; I'll keep on trusting Him because I always come back to He IS good, He IS faithful, He IS in control and I can't imagine life without Him! And, I'm hoping it's safe to be honest with all of you. I'm hoping we all have moments of questioning our faith? I know we've all been through difficult situations and prayed and didn't get the results we expected.