

tight, that basic surgeries like club foot corrections don't get done. The children come to me severely anemic, severely malnourished, and with serious vitamin and mineral deficiencies that produce all manner of physical problems. Every time I think of the faces of those I've left behind, my heart bleeds. They've all been promised to me, as soon as I can accommodate them.

Jesus and the angels must weep over the injustices these children suffer. Their brains and bodies may not function well, but the children's spirits are just as alive as those of people without disabilities. We'll see them in heaven, and they'll look us in the eye and say, "Thank you so much. *Thanks for seeing me.*"

If you'd like to know more about SCH,

visit my blog: www.sarahscovenanthomes.blogspot.com. The blog is the heart of SCH. On the blog, you can follow the progress of specific children, pray, read our FAQ, and find out how to get involved. You can reach me with questions at sarahscovenanthomes@ymail.com. You can give to SCH tax-deductibly through India's Hope, a 501c3 in the US. Their paypal address is ihope@mtintouch.net. Thanks for caring!

Sarah Rebbavarapu is an American missionary married to an Indian minister named James, who runs an indigenous church-planting and relief/development organization called India Christian Ministries. James and Sarah have been married since January 1996 and have three daughters: Simona, Shayna, and Amira.



Caleb



Solomon before (below) and after (left)



Noah



Solomon

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For more information about this magazine please email the editor, Emily Berger, at djberger@platinum.ca

by Sarah Rebbavarapu

Thanks for Seeing Me

Sarah's Covenant Homes (two homes for 43 children with neurological special needs) is where the deepest desires of my heart meet the deepest needs of children's lives. I want them, and they *need* love and care from someone like me.

Here in India, children born with neurological special needs like cerebral palsy, mental retardation, epilepsy, and autism are the most likely to be abandoned and least likely to be adopted. Consequently, they languish in institutional orphanages where they're seen as liabilities rather than treasured individuals. Neglected physically and emotionally, these children tend to die young. They're some of the most profoundly alone human beings on the planet. I approached the government institutional

orphanage in 2007 and asked them for five children with special needs, specifically mental retardation. They told me, "Why only five? We have over seventy children in this building with mental retardation. Why not at least start with ten?" That sounded great to me!

A month or so later, I was wanting to make preparations for the ten children, and I called the government back to ask for more details about the kids we were to receive: How many boys and how many girls? The department director said, "I can tell you this much. You're getting about 30 boys and about 20 girls." My heart was overwhelmed—with excitement!

Of course, I still didn't know where the money or staff would come from. But just

about a week before I'd gotten a promise from the Lord: "I've taken great pains to provide for the temple of the Lord..." (said David to Solomon in 1 Chron 22). He'd provided 37 tons of gold, 300-some tons of silver, wood, and skilled workers. Then David said, "Now begin the work, and the Lord be with you." We started by faith, and the weekend before I received the first shift of ten abandoned special children, I received funds to begin and two sets of foster parents stepped forward to commit! Since that day, it's been one miracle of provision after another. It's been a ride!

My daughter Simona interviewed me for a school project. Two questions she asked me were "What about your work makes you happy?" and "What makes you sad?" Here's what I told her:

What makes me happy? I'm happy when I see so many genuine smiles. And I'm happy when I think of kids like Dhivena, Hope, Caleb, and Lydia.

Dhivena is one of a set of twins. She and her sister Amulya are about 13 years old, and both suffer from cerebral palsy and have deformed feet. Dhivena was unable to walk and used to crawl everywhere. It was heartbreaking to see a teenage girl having to crawl across the bathroom floor to use the toilet. We got her feet operated on, and now she can run! Now we're planning Amulya's surgery as well.

Hope, 11, had chronically infected ears. When we took her to the ENT, we learned that her ear drums had completely deteriorated, as had much of the conductive bone in her ears. She was profoundly deaf and in constant pain. She had stuffed many cotton balls, tiny sticks, bits of paper, and other items into her ear canals to stop the pain. Through the kindness of a donor, we were able to get both eardrums reconstructed, with the goal of then putting in

cochlear implants. The wonderful thing is that, with her new eardrums, Hope is able to hear! With dry ears, Hope rarely has an infection now, except when she pokes things into her ears (a habit she hasn't been able to break—you might keep her in your prayers!) Hope was completely nonverbal, but she is now trying to imitate words she hears. It's so exciting!

Caleb is 12. He has cerebral palsy, but the diagnosis of mental retardation was wrong. We enrolled Caleb in a mainstream private school (along with a handful of others) and he has excelled. Caleb has difficulty speaking, but now that he's learning to read and write, he'll be able to release all that's been in his heart all these years. Maybe he'll write a book! Caleb used to fall down hundreds of times per day, and everyone thought it was due to his poor muscle control. As it turned out, he had strabismus (misaligned eyes) and was seeing a double picture. We got his eyes operated on, and the day after surgery, he ran down the hospital hall without falling once!

Lydia, a little girl with brain injury, was abandoned and spent the first two years of her life in a hospital. She was severely neglected and malnourished, with long hair so full of lice that they'd made festering sores in her scalp. Lydia constantly had a look of horror on her face. Five months after she came, we were dancing to some worship music, and Lydia was sitting in her high chair. She began to look up at the ceiling and point. Then she began to smile, and from that day on, she's been a smiley, happy baby and has gained quite a bit of weight. She's now learning to roll over. I love her so much. I love all of them so much.

What makes me sad? Several things. I'm sad when I see how much my kids with uncontrolled epilepsy suffer. Solomon is one example. When he came to us, he was frail

and sickly. He had seizures about three times a week—grand mal tonic/clonics—and he would injure his face terribly. Shortly before a seizure, he'd get the urge to wander, and when the seizure came, he'd be outside and get seriously hurt on the concrete. Solomon has rolling veins, and every trip to the hospital is a torture. He would look at me with anger, hate, and betrayal when I'd take him to the hospital. That's so hard. There was one horrible time when we nearly lost Solomon. Thankfully, we've gotten Solomon's seizures under much better control now (they happen about monthly now), and he has gained over 22 pounds in our care. At one point, when he was on fewer meds, he actually began to count and to say a few words. With his meds upped again, he's lost that. That makes me sad.

Sad is not a strong enough word to describe how I felt when two of our precious children passed away. Matthew was a wonderful little boy of about five with down syndrome who came to us in a septic state and was only with us 21 days. Keziah was our tiniest baby—with us only two months before she succumbed to complications of Dandy Walker syndrome.

I'm sad when I see how reluctant people are to give children like ours a chance. We had a terrible time trying to get six of our most intellectually capable children enrolled in school last year. Since they'd never been sent to school, they were far behind their age-mates. Here we were trying to give them a chance at a future, and no one seemed to want to cooperate, afraid that the parents of already-enrolled students would object. This year we're sending eleven children (the rest have special education and/or early intervention classes on-site).

I could tell many more sad stories. What makes me the saddest, though, is when I think of the children I haven't yet received. Special children continue to be abandoned, and the government institution has as many of them now as when I started to receive them. They live 30 to a room, without furniture or diapers, sleeping on the floor. There are so many of them, and resources are so



Keziah



Nathan



Lydia