



“And the light shines in the darkness...”



## Stories from Hard-to-Reach Areas

*God is using Operation Christmas Child shoebox gifts to transform difficult areas of the globe with the Gospel. Read how below and feel free to share these stories with others.*

### **GOD'S LOVE CHANGES HEARTS**

Khalid's\* father is an alcoholic who used to beat him and withhold food from him. His mother didn't speak up about the abuse because his father hurt her as well. As a result, Khalid became very shy. He loved to sit alone in a dark room. Upset with his family, he said, "My house was a hell."

When a pastor and his wife came to their village with Operation Christmas Child shoebox gifts, Khalid did not want to go and receive one, but his mother insisted. Before giving out the boxes, the pastor told the children, "God loves you." This was the first time Khalid heard that he was loved by anyone. He was surprised that children far away had packed a shoebox just for him to show him God's love.

"On that night, I was very happy. Even though my father doesn't like me, God [does]," Khalid said.

Khalid began participating in our follow-up discipleship program offered to many shoebox recipients.

"In one of the classes, I gave my life to the Lord because He died for me," Khalid said.

His mother and sister immediately noticed a change in him. He was more joyful than they had ever seen him before.

Khalid began learning Bible stories from the pastor, and today he teaches Sunday School. The pastor said, "He became my right hand—on behalf of me he even leads meetings."

Seeing the change in Khalid, his mother and sister have become believers and now attend church.

Khalid said, "I am very thankful to Operation Christmas Child. I do not know who sent me that box, but that gift brought me thus far ... Since Jesus gave His life to me, I want to introduce this loving God to all children in my village and other places. Every second of my life, I want to serve Him."

## **BREAD SELLERS MEET THE BREAD OF LIFE**

Two young boys named Arjun\* and Vihaan\* were at their daily task of selling milk and bread when Aparna\*, an Operation Christmas Child ministry partner, asked them their names. As the three began a conversation, the boys smiled and Aparna invited them to her home. There she surprised the boys with shoebox gifts and told them about Jesus Christ.

The boys were so happy to listen to her Bible stories that they asked if they could bring their friends to hear them too. When these boys and girls came, Aparna offered them shoebox gifts and the Gospel as well. Excited, the children kept coming back to learn more about Jesus.

This was the beginning of a class of The Greatest Journey discipleship program. Thirty students from non-Christian backgrounds initially attended and some began going to church services, bringing their parents to worship with them as well. Neighbors of another religion began asking them not to attend The Greatest Journey, but many of these children now believe in Christ and worship Him secretly.

## **SHOEBOX GIFTS REACH A FAMILY**

In one hard-to-reach nation, two brothers, ages 10 and 12, each received their first gift ever in an Operation Christmas Child shoebox. Being from a non-Christian background, they were surprised that their first visit to a church would result in such a wonderful gift. They brought the shoeboxes home to their mother who also rejoiced.

One day, the church member who distributed the shoebox gifts visited the boys' home. The family was eager to thank this man for the treasures in the shoeboxes. "I love Christians and want to know more about Jesus Christ," the mother said. She began attending church and accepted Jesus as Lord of her life. Although she was going through some personal struggles, she, in turn, shared the Gospel with her mother-in-law and sister-in-law. Now eight adults and two children in the family actively attend church.

## **A LIFE TRANSFORMED**

*Aaron\* lives in a country where Christians are a threatened minority.*

Although only 7 years old, he was known as a difficult boy at home and at church. Often hyper and misbehaving, Aaron made Sunday School a challenge for his teachers. Still, the church invited Aaron to their special outreach event for children. He was so disruptive during the meeting, though, that when the Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes came out he thought, I won't receive a gift because of my behavior!

But Aaron did receive a shoebox gift lovingly packed by a boy far away. Opening it, he found cars, a shirt, and pens, but his favorite part was the note inside. On a white piece of paper was the sender's handprint and a note: "Every day you can put your hand on this paper and we can pray for each other."

Aaron began doing this daily. He also started collecting money in a box so he could have something to give to others. He simply thought more about other people. This shocked his mother.

After Aaron received his shoebox gift, he also enrolled in The Greatest Journey discipleship class. During that course, he accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior! Today God continues to transform Aaron for His glory as the boy learns more about following Christ and sharing Him with others.

*\*Names changed to protect identity*