Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.

Matthew 13:8

Growth and Harvest

So much of what we do here at New Heights is about “planting seeds” of God’s word into the lives of those we meet. We do not always get to see the harvest that God brings from those seeds, but when we do, it is a privilege. This quarter has brought us a number of moments when we have seen the way that people’s lives have changed as a result of our ministry. Whether it has been people giving their lives to Jesus through our digital ministry or girls who have been through the girls’ empowerment program having the confidence to speak up for themselves, we know that this growth is God’s work. Seeing it is an encouragement to us and a motivation to continue sowing faithfully into the places to which God has called us.
As we are reaching the end of the school year, our girls’ and boys’ empowerment programs have drawn to a close, and we are thinking and planning for next year. We have been incredibly encouraged by the young people’s response to the programs. We went back to see the girls with whom we completed our first Girls’ Empowerment program in October. They were so pleased to see us, and we were blown away by the stories they told us about how the course has impacted their lives. We heard story after story, not only of the way these girls were impacted, but of how they then went on to impact other girls around them as a result of this course.

One of the girls was so affected by the program that she hung her certificate somewhere she could see it every morning when she woke up. She then took the program we taught her and ran it in her scout group, and she is still leading that group of girls. It was so encouraging to hear that she is not only applying what we taught her in her own life but is also sharing it with others.

Another of the girls is the first girl in her extended family to be getting an education. Her cousins used to make fun of her because of this. However, after our program, she had the confidence to stand up to them and teach them the importance of education for both boys and girls. Not only did her cousins stop making fun of her, but some of them also decided to start getting an education.

It is stories like this that remind us that empowered people empower others. We may only be working with small groups of young women, but the impact does not stop with them; it ripples out to affect their whole communities.
One of the privileges of the Made Clean program is that it gives us the opportunity to impact the lives of, and share something of God’s love with, the refugee families that we are serving. We have now been in the new set of camps for long enough to begin building deeper relationships with the families and for them to trust us. This means that, as we wash clothes and teach and have fun with the children, we get to have conversations and share spiritual truths that bring benefits beyond the immediate ones of clean clothes and the joy of learning together.

The families that we work with have experienced war and are still now, living in very difficult circumstances. As we wash clothes, many of them open up to us and share their stories of how they left Syria, what it was like to live there during the war, and some of the struggles they are currently facing. They do not have many people around them who can listen to their stories. We are able to give them a listening and caring ear. As we talk to them, we are also able to share something of the hope that God gives us, that He is with us, and that He has good plans for our lives, even in the midst of challenging circumstances.

Sadly for the children in these camps, physical violence is often a normal part of their lives. Our program, in stark contrast, teaches them about love, forgiveness, and being kind to one another. In one of the camps we visit, two sisters were always complaining to us about the way their brother treated them. He ordered them around and often hit them. One of our team members was able to talk to the boy individually and told him that his behavior needed to change. It is possible we are the only people in his life giving him this message. We continued to monitor this situation and finally a day came when the girls told us that their brother’s behavior towards them had changed completely. They were so pleased, and we were grateful that our messages of love and forgiveness were being applied by the children in a practical way.
As our Mother’s Club program progresses, we are week after week, getting to know these women better. They are benefiting from the information we are sharing, but most of all, they are enjoying being able to spend time together and with people who are willing to listen to their thoughts and feelings. Many of these women married young and became mothers at a young age. All of the mothers we are currently working with are also refugees and are living in difficult circumstances. They often haven’t had access to good parenting advice or to good examples of parenting in the community around them. Sometimes just the simplest advice can change things completely.

Our mobile counseling unit is continuing to bring much-needed psychological support to people in their own communities. It is not always easy for people to access this kind of support here in Lebanon. For most people, quality support is either unavailable or unaffordable, and there continues to be a taboo in society about accessing this kind of support. So we now park up our big blue R.V. in five separate areas around Beirut to make this support readily and freely available to more people. We are seeing people not only feeling able to access this support for themselves and their children but encouraging others to do so too.

One mother, Warda, from our Mother’s Club in the Bekaa, was very stressed. Her neighbors annoyed and upset her with their advice and she was getting angry and losing her temper with her children. We talked with Warda about not taking people’s feedback personally and trying to take something positive from it. We also gave her some breathing techniques to try when she felt angry. When we saw Warda the next month, we were surprised to see her happy and smiling broadly. When we asked what had happened, Warda’s sister told us, “I hardly recognise her now!”. Warda told us that when she would get angry, she would remind herself of what we said. As a result her life had changed; her neighbors started coming over and drinking coffee with her, she had much better relationships with people in general and she was no longer losing her temper with her children. She was calm and happy, and her sister told us, “All I hear now is laughter from Warda’s house.”
One mother told us that her daughter, Maria, who had been coming to the mobile counseling unit every week, had really benefitted from her sessions. Maria had been struggling with anger and frustration at home, as well as with fear. Her mother messaged to tell us that she had seen a drastic reduction in all of these things in her daughter after Maria had seen our psychologist. Maria’s mother really wants her daughter to continue with these sessions, and she told us that she would encourage anyone whose children had similar issues to use our service too.

BEYOND THE BOX

Working with church partners means that we are able to reach more people in more communities with our Beyond the Box program. Our partners know their communities best and are able to get the food packages along with the Bible activities to the families who need them most. Our partners have been privileged to witness extraordinary moments of connection and transformation in this period. Engaging in sincere conversations, offering prayers, and sharing personal stories, they have experienced the profound power of God's grace touching lives in remarkable ways.

TOUCHING LIVES THROUGH MEANINGFUL CONVERSATIONS

During this time, some of our church partners were able to have an incredible conversation with one of the families they serve. They told us that they could always talk with this family about God, but that this week was different from the others. The two children were asking questions beyond their years, and as they were talking, there was an opportunity for one of our partners to share her testimony about how she surrendered her life to Jesus when she was 14 and how He helped her with her fear of death. This led to a deep conversation about death and what happens afterward.

Moreover, our partners always felt that the father didn’t really want to talk seriously about faith. However, this time when the topic of death came up, they felt that he wanted to listen and talk. He had previously had cancer, and they had an opportunity to talk with him and the whole family about life and death and what our faith says about these things. The family was grateful for the visit and the continued care and support, and we continue to be amazed by the way Beyond the Box allows our church partners to reach out to their communities.
Our drama team finished off the school year with a number of Greater Love performances and by piloting a brand new schools show. This show is called “The Giving Festival,” and it focuses on caring for those around us, whether that’s by giving our things, our talents, or our time. Full of puppets, stories, and music, the play follows a girl who learns that we all have something to give and we all need help from time to time. The director of the show told us this about the first performance: “I was able to go with the team to see the first performance; it was a real privilege to see the children’s reactions firsthand. From the moment the children came into the hall and saw the set, they were excited to see the play. They laughed in all the right places, and there was even a spontaneous round of applause for the shadow puppets. The teacher who spoke to the children at the end told them she thought this was the best team they had seen performing in the school. Better than all of that, when they were asked questions at the end, the children really seemed to understand the message about us all having something to give.” We are looking forward to touring this show in the new school year.
We Want to Thank You,

IT IS A PRIVILEGE AND A JOY TO WITNESS TOGETHER
THE HARVEST THAT GOD IS PRODUCING TOGETHER.

FOR PARTNERING WITH US AS WE
SOW SEEDS OF GOD’S WORD.

We have been very encouraged this quarter by the
impact of our varied and different ministries on the
lives of people in this region.

KHALID - FROM DESPAIR TO JOY

Khalid started his online conversation with us by saying, “I don't want to follow Christ.” After welcoming him warmly and introducing ourselves, we asked him why he felt that way about Christ. He told us about the despair he felt and about the bad way the world had treated him. We were able to tell him that he is precious to God and loved by Him. We explained that God’s love can help us to leave the past behind. He replied and said: “I need God.” We suggested that he pray and reflect on how much God loved him. He returned to us and told us he had had a dream. Through the dream, he felt that God was showing him how much He cares about people and our well-being and how much he loves us. He was overjoyed when he understood how much God loves him. He began to read all of our messages and opened his heart to understand God’s word. After we presented him with the message of salvation, he asked, “What does God want me to do?” We told him to believe in and worship Christ, who came for his salvation. He responded joyfully: “I will give thanks and praise in private and in public, during my work and free time.” We then invited him to attend our discipleship meetings.

Through our digital ministry, we are seeing many people come to faith all over the Arab world. Some of them are in countries where it is very hard for believers to gather together. This is the reason our weekly online worship meetings are so important. Between 60 and 70 people watch these meetings on Facebook and Youtube weekly and have the opportunity to worship with other believers. This month we also began a weekly prayer meeting where some of these believers gather and pray with and for one another. It is so beautiful to pray with people who have come to know Christ through our ministry and to experience them serving and blessing one another and us with their prayers.