

Staff Work

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## Family, Dirt-Bikes, and Education

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## Family, Dirt-Bikes, and Education

### Abstract

"Having the privilege of joining others in the work of bringing education and literacy to students and educators in Ethiopia is life-giving."

Posting about what makes a person feel most alive from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/family-dirt-bikes-and-education/>

### Keywords

In All Things, God, life, relationships, Ethiopia

### Disciplines

Christianity | Education

### Comments

*In All Things* is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

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 [all in allthings.org/family-dirt-bikes-and-education/](https://allthings.org/family-dirt-bikes-and-education/)

Liz Moss

Recently a Facebook friend asked this question: “What’s the thing in your life that makes your heart sing? When do you feel most alive?”

I found the comments fascinating:

*When my daughter runs into my arms.*

*Painting, weaving and drumming my heart song.*

*Water. In all of its many forms.*

*Music.*

*When I’m with those I love and when I’m singing.*

*Listening to young new readers reading books aloud!*

*Being surrounded/immersed in the “grandeur of God” in nature—streamside in Yellowstone—Redrock country.*

*Beethoven piano sonatas and when my son laughs and the beach and getting a hug from my wife and the feeling of being appreciated and snuggling with my dog and having good friends. And pasta with cream sauce and who can forget red velvet cupcakes and the New Yorker magazine and when I come home from a trip and Nina tells me she misses me.*

*My kid. I cannot believe the love I feel when I’m with him and singing with him!*

*Walking in nature hearing birds singing and while listening to upbeat music.*

The list went on and on...

A few weeks ago my husband and I were in our car traveling to a nearby lake for the day with our two sons. On that day, in particular, the sunlight was perfect, lighting up the sky with a bright blue background and crisp white clouds. The Iowa corn fields weren’t quite knee-high and the bean fields were lined up neatly as we passed field after field. It was a beautiful day.

Listening to all types of music is our family’s “thing” on road trips to about any location—on our way to church on Sunday mornings, on the road to our summer cottage, and on afternoon drives on a warm summer day. As we made our way east that afternoon, the music’s volume increased and the car windows were lowered. And, the looks on the faces of my seven and five-year-old were made of pure joy. The warm wind hit their faces as they sang along to a [song](#) we have listened to more times than I can count. And, although life can have its challenges in our life of raising [two very different boys with two very different personalities](#), at that moment, all the struggles seemed to melt away. Life was at peace.

Moments like this make my heart sing. Times with our family, together in one place, gives me harmony and peace—either in the car singing at the top of our lungs, around the dinner table, or together on our couch watching a movie. Family makes my heart sing.

## **What’s the thing in your life that makes your heart sing?**

We made our way through the steep hills of southern Ethiopia in Kembata-Tembaro on a warm morning in March on the back of dirt bikes we had hired to make it to an area not yet touched by the advances of education and schools. The rocky terrain eventually ended and the road turned into a narrow dirt path as we passed [tukuls](#) and donkeys and grazing cattle. Children from the main road kilometers away had

followed the [ferenji](#) (foreigners) by foot, racing to see where the local “taxi-drivers” would bring us. Eventually, the bikes stopped, and we hiked further over a stream and up an even steeper hill. From the top, we could see huts placed throughout the hillside—tukuls filled with families living on less than one acre of land, few with electricity, and many with a limited diet of [enset](#), coffee, and grains.

A local Ethiopian Ministry of Education official, a school administrator, and future “students” had joined us on the hill to share the vision of providing an opportunity for literacy and education to children from the community in partnership Ethiopia Reads’ “[Horse-Powered Literacy](#)” initiative. [Ethiopia Reads](#) collaborates with communities to build schools, plant libraries, train educators, boost literacy, and provide youth and families with the tools to improve their lives. And, the [Horse-Powered Literacy](#) program works with deep-rural communities to give young students a beginning introduction to literacy and learning, where they might not have had this access previously.

Watching the faces of the children was inspiring. Sharing in the hope for the start of a literacy program in a rural community was thrilling. Being a part of something beyond myself and my Northwest-Iowa-world is life-giving.

Years ago when my husband and I first traveled to this East African country, we asked God to open our eyes to a new culture and country filled with people deeply loved by our Creator. We discerned and sought out a direction for how we could join God in what God is already doing in Ethiopia. We found our answer in two schools in [Azedabo and Fundame](#), Ethiopia and a [coffee partnership](#). Each time I travel to Ethiopia, it can feel like I only see a small part of the big picture God sees. Over and over again I see something more beautiful, life-changing, and transformational than I could have ever expected in my life—not just for the people of Ethiopia but more importantly for myself.

Having the privilege of joining others in the work of bringing education and literacy to students and educators in Ethiopia is life-giving.

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## Footnotes

1. Thanks to Ann Kansfield, pastor at Greenpoint Reformed Church in Brooklyn, NY and chaplain in the FDNY for first asking these questions. Being able to be most authentic as a person and minister is what makes her heart sing. ↩