

Greetings from Ethiopia on a beautiful, sunny Sunday! We're currently in the middle of the two rainy seasons ("the rainy season" and "the big rainy season" respectively), so I'm soaking in the sunshine while I can. I enjoyed a wonderful and challenging sermon with the other missionaries around here, then went to lunch with two friends at a new restaurant in town that actually has hamburgers and French fries. Soddo is turning into a regular metropolis with paved roads and foreigner-safe meat!

Most of you know that my life has been a whirlwind of activity in the last couple months—in fact, I even saw some of you. I couldn't tell you about my plans in the last newsletter, because my trip to the States was a surprise for most of my family at home. How and why, you ask? Well, a few months ago, Equip asked Dr Mary and me to spend two weeks in North Carolina to teach a medical course. After agreeing to do so, I got a crazy idea in my head—maybe I could spend a week in Idaho with my family before the course. Equip generously approved the trip, and the plans were set in motion. I landed in Boise the day before Easter and managed to surprise a few of my family members. My mom screamed. For those of you who know her....that's a big deal. It was a delightful (and fast!) week with my family and friends before flying to North Carolina. The medical course was amazing. Dr Mary created the course years ago and has taught it many times. Since she moved to Ethiopia 15 years ago, however, it has mostly been taught by other people. I was amazed with the amount of content that is taught in two weeks. Mary calls it her "How to be your own doctor in Timbuktu" course. (Check it out on the Equip website equipinternational.com.) We had 18 motivated missionaries in the class, and they all seemed to enjoy it and learn a lot. I look forward to hopefully getting more involved with the course in the future.

During that week, Mary had a blood test that seemed to indicate that her cancer is in remission. We're not completely sure if that's the correct terminology for what is going on in her body, but she's off medication now, and feeling fantastic. She continues to have energy and we are constantly cooking up more plans for the future. Praise the Lord for His mercy and healing!

After the whirlwind three weeks in America, I spent a couple days in Addis Ababa (the capital of Ethiopia) before a dear friend from home flew in. Keith is a college friend who was here for 2 ½ weeks to take pictures and hang out with me. He is a professional photographer, and took some incredible pictures of my life. He posted a bunch on facebook, so email me (sophinafrica@gmail.com) if you are interested in tracking him down in order to admire his handiwork. He is planning to do some fund-raising with them, and I look forward to using his incredible pictures and video to help tell my story when I'm home.

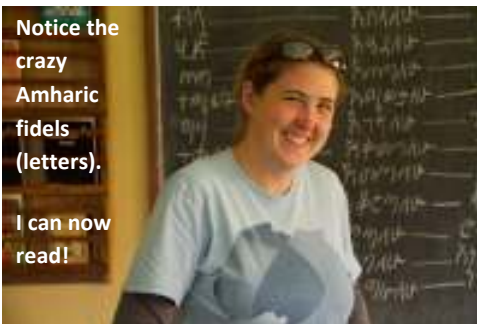
Clinic continues to be an amazing and educational experience. It is such a privilege to be mentored by the incredible brilliance and expertise that is Dr Mary. She is not a fan of taking care of women with gynecological or pregnancy concerns, so I have taken over that aspect of clinic. It took a few months, but I have fallen in love with these expectant mothers. Keeping these women healthy is the most effective way to improve the health of the whole community; however, they are also the ones who do not seek medical care for themselves. So, whenever I see a woman who is pregnant (whether or not she is a patient), I give her a card that allows her to obtain prenatal care from us. That prenatal care involves protein supplementation, multivitamins, and malaria prevention medication. We also do basic assessment and transport to the hospital if indicated. We currently have about 15 women under our care, and I have dreams of making that number grow. In fact, another clinic is in the works—a strictly prenatal clinic at a church just 10 minutes away from where we live. I am so excited about it!



People in the States are already donating money and medicines for the clinic, and we are in the process of talking to the church and government officials about making it happen.

Speaking of maternal health, I currently am baby-less at my house. I brought little Tamrat back to his very happy dad the day before I left for the States. He was six months old at the time, and had spent three months with me. A few weeks ago, however, I received the very sad news that he passed due to a bad case of malaria. Although I haven't seen Little Sophie recently, her dad says that she is healthy, happy, and growing. My house and I are ready for another little one at any time. I even have a wonderful nursery set up with a crib, changing table, and more clothes and diapers than any one baby can possibly need. Mary keeps telling me that I'm morbid because I want some hapless mother to die so that I can have another little one in my house. I try not to think of it that way, but do look forward to having a baby around again.

A huge drain on my time and brain is language study. I have increased the intensity of my Amharic classes and study at home, and am so excited to be able to understand much of what is said around me. My teacher is pleased with my progress, and I can have basic conversations about everyday activities—as long as the other person doesn't talk too fast, that is. My Wolaitta study is coming along too. Although I haven't done much book studying, I am making more of a concerted effort to pay attention to how sentences and words are put together, instead of just letting it absorb like it was before. I tell ya, trying to learn two languages is a great way to wear a brain out! I love the increasing ability to understand and communicate, though.



Plans are coming together for my official furlough in the fall. I plan to be in the States for about six weeks, starting in the beginning of September. I am in the midst of planning for coverage while I am gone, and am excited about the two nurses who will be here at that time. One is a friend of mine from my days of working at a Bible camp in Minnesota, and the other is a student

from the MMI class in North Carolina. Not only will they be very helpful to Mary, but they will also gain priceless experience and knowledge through their time working with her.

I would like to start planning my schedule for the weeks that I am home now, so please email me if you are interested in having me come to your church, Bible study, etc, to share my story. I am not promising that I will be able to accept every invitation, but I will do my best. My schedule is pretty clear at the moment, so the sooner you contact me, the more likely I will be able to come.

Thank you so much for your love, prayers, and support of me and the work here. It would be impossible if not for you. Please know that you are touching and changing lives. May God bless and keep you as you serve Him!

In His grace,

Sophie

Ps—You can keep up with me on my blog at <http://sophinafrica.com>. It's set on "private" mode, so you need to have a username and password to access the majority of the posts. Email me at sophinafrica@gmail.com if you would like to have access.



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"For the Equipping of the Saints and the Strengthening of the Body of Christ" Eph. 4:12