

Walk to the Water

by Jennifer Nielsen



Jennifer Nielsen lives in San Diego with her husband, and their three children.



It is a beautiful Saturday afternoon in Southern California. It's warm, and the sun is shining brightly. My daughter is thrilled because she just scored the winning goal in her soccer game. She runs over to me with a huge grin and I hand her an ice-cold bottle of water. I wipe beads of sweat from her forehead as she guzzles down the refreshing drink. As we leave, we walk hand-in-hand through the soccer field as the sprinklers spray wildly into the air. So we begin to run, dodging them on our way to the parking lot. We are giggling and out of breath as we reach the car. Our drive home is filled with conversation as my 6 year old tells me what she wants to be when she grows up. This week she can't decide if she would like to be a professional soccer player or a doctor. Last week it was an astronaut. Her future is bright with endless possibility.

A few hours later, and 9,700 miles away in Kenya, it is early morning. Already it is hot and dry. A young girl walks four miles to collect dirty water for her family. Today's journey will take her over four hours. Getting there is not so bad, but walking back those long four miles with forty-four pounds of water resting on her head is difficult. Her neck and back are strong, but after a while, she aches with each step. Of course, she needs this water to live, but it will also make her sick. It's not clean water; it's filled with waterborne diseases. They're opportunistic little microscopic monsters just waiting for her to take a sip. When she does, they can enter her body and cause all sorts of problems like diarrhea, or worms, or worse. Because it takes her most of the day to get the water, she doesn't have the opportunity to attend school. She is illiterate and her future looks narrow and dark.



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Wanna know more?

Check out these sites:

- www.africare.org
- www.lifewater.org
- www.bloodwatermission.com
- www.wateraid.org
- www.compassion.org
- www.one.org
- www.samaritanspurse.org
- www.worldvision.org

More than one billion people in developing countries don't have access to clean water.¹ In Africa, there are 360 million people who can't get safe drinking water—that's over half the continent's population.² But that's just the beginning. Kids who can't get clean water get sick. Many of them even die; nearly two million children die each year from lack of safe drinking water and poor sanitation.³ Around the world, diarrhea kills 5,000 children every day.⁴ Those that survive are often too sick to go to school. Children with water related diseases, (like diarrhea and parasitic infections), are absent from class a total of 443 million days each year. That's equivalent to an entire school year for all seven-year-old children living in Ethiopia.⁵ When a child is not able to attend school, their learning potential diminishes. Take away a child's access to education and they are left without opportunity. Not only does a person need pure water for their very existence but they need it to have a healthy, prosperous life. Without clean water life ceases to exist.

It breaks my heart to think there are children in this world in 2007 that are dying from something as easily curable as diarrhea. It's overwhelming to think that for millions, it's water that's the determining factor as to who lives and who doesn't. Should clean water be a factor in deciding who attends school? Should clean water be a factor in who lives and who dies? I know these numbers I've given you are unfathomable. It might seem hopeless. It might seem like the problem is too big, and it might seem like you couldn't make much of a difference. But Christ brings hope. I think it's the dream of God to use every one of us to end the water crisis. See, there are thousands of people that are going to read this. You're not alone. We can act together; we can make a difference. We can pray. We can give and we can use our voices. I have hope, because we can do something. We can make a world where one day, every child will be able to drink water without fear of getting sick. We can make a world where kids can attend school and dream of their future. I believe together we can make a difference. I believe through Christ there is hope.

In my dream, I see the future. It is a hot, dry day in Kenya. A group of rambunctious children have just finished a soccer game. A little girl excitedly runs over to her mother with a huge grin on her face, she scored the winning goal. She flops down under a shady tree and guzzles down the water her mother just handed her. She removes her cleats and wiggles her toes in the wet grass. It feels good on her hot feet. She leans her head back against her mother and says she wants to be a professional soccer player when she grows up. Her mother hugs her and giggles. Just last week her daughter was dreaming of becoming doctor. With a kiss to the top of her head, she tells her daughter to dream big and assures her the future is filled with endless possibilities.

¹<http://www.who.int/heli/risks/water/water/en/> ²According to the United Nations ^{3,4,8}http://hdr.undp.org/hdr2006/pdfs/report/hdr_2006_overview.pdf



**BUY A TEE;
DRILL A WELL**

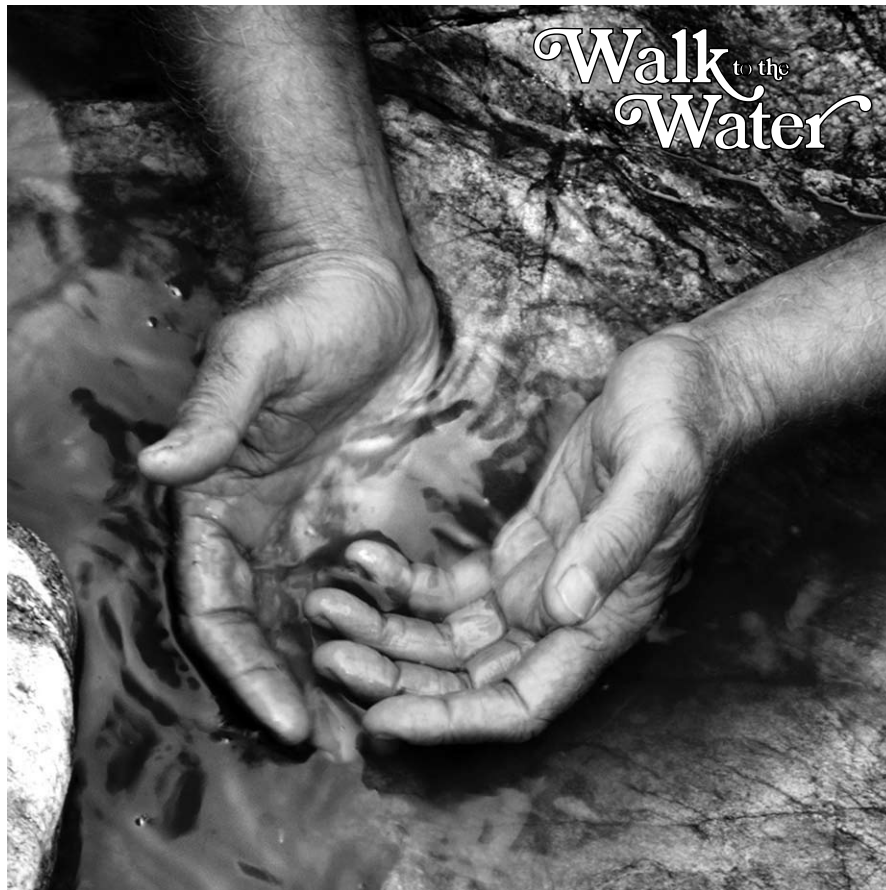


There are 360 million people in Africa without access to clean water. That's half the population of the continent. That's a big problem, we know, but instead of dwelling on how enormous the task is, we thought we'd do a bit of drilling. That's right, we're raising money to drill wells in Africa. And you can be a part of it. See, just by purchasing this tee shirt, you can get involved. Here's the sweetest part, 100% of the price you pay for this shirt will go into drilling the well. Some generous donors have already covered the cost of the shirt, so that means your entire \$14.95 goes into the ground and changes lives. Want to buy a tee? Or want to know more? Hit the link below:

www.halfwaythere.org



What Can We Do?



Pray: Isaiah 58.9 says, "Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I" (NIV) Prayer is absolutely essential for this situation to be resolved. God can act on our behalf, He can intercede in areas that are out of our reach or those that are just overwhelming.

Give: You can help fund a well project through organizations like Lifewater International, Africare, Blood: Water Mission, WaterAid and Samaritan's Purse.

Sponsor: There are many organizations, like Compassion International, where you can sponsor a child in a developing nation. The cost is around \$40 a month. This amount supplies them with water, food, medicine and education. Most importantly, organizations like Compassion allow children to hear about Jesus and encourage them to develop a life long relationship with God. My family and I sponsor a little girl in Kenya and we truly enjoy being a part of her life.

Advocate: Join the One Campaign. This is a campaign to eradicate poverty. Their web site allows you to download bulletins to give to your church, school or place of business that inform people of the dire need to end poverty. They also have letters for you to mail to your senators and representatives. We need to speak up for the people in the world that do not have the freedom to speak up for themselves.