

HPU student learned to rely on God through surgery in Africa

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BROWNWOOD—Kelsey Duvall learned important lessons during a recent mission trip to Africa. She discovered life does not go as expected, in spite of planning and preparation. She also learned God answers prayers and cares for his children.

Howard Payne
University student
Kelsey Duvall served on
a mission trip to
Mozambique during the
summer. While she was
there, she had to be
hospitalized and
undergo surgery.

Duvall, a senior at [Howard Payne University](#), became so ill during her summer stay in Mozambique, she had to be hospitalized.

Duvall served with [Samaria Mission](#), a team involved in church planting through evangelism, discipleship, church development and social improvement.

"The purpose of the mission trip was to get tents, bedding and food and go in ahead of other teams from the U.S.," she said. "We were there to serve the missionaries."

Duvall started feeling sick soon after she began working with the group.

"I was sick for 10 days in Mozambique," Duvall said. "My throat had an

abscess on the right side, and it was swollen so you could not see the right side of my cheekbone. I could not open my mouth more than about an inch."

Two African translators who were making an eight-hour trip back to the largest city in the area offered her a ride so she could see a doctor.

"I was able to see the doctor that day," she said. "I got prescribed really strong antibiotics, and the doctor said if they didn't start working to come back in three days."

After three days, Duvall still wasn't any better. When she went back to the hospital, doctors gave her an IV antibiotic that helped significantly.

She was released from the hospital, but in less than 24 hours, she had relapsed and was sent back to the hospital for an entire week.

"I was thinking I would get to fly home and have surgery in America and be with my family, but I was stuck in Africa because I could not be off of the IV, or my abscess would possibly grow and block off my airway," Duvall said.

Meanwhile, back in America, friends prayed for Duvall and her family.

"Many people from Howard Payne shared with me that they were praying for Kelsey's situation," said Keith Platte, director of the Baptist Student Ministry at HPU. "I received an e-mail from Jose Lopez, a friend of Kelsey's, asking if I could pass the information along to all of HPU. I told Jose that I was sure people at Howard Payne would want to know and would want to lift Kelsey up in prayer."

Duvall's parents could not join their daughter in Africa because they didn't have passports.

"It was harder for my family at times than for me," Duvall said. "They

couldn't just come help me. Having to trust God without having anyone else to lean on was spiritually challenging for all of us."

After spending several long days in the hospital, the doctors finally discovered Duvall had tonsillitis and needed immediate surgery.

"While I was in the hospital, before I had my surgery, the doctor called my parents specifically to tell them he was a Christian and it was going to be OK," Duvall said.

After the surgery, Duvall recovered quickly. She was required to spend 14 more days in Africa while she recovered, but she was able to help with Vacation Bible School at a church during that time.

"One of my favorite parts of the mission trip was after I got out of the hospital," Duvall said. "I was able to go to the waterfalls with the youth group in a beautiful area. We hiked up the side of the mountain, and I got to reflect over the trip while looking at the water. It felt almost like God was saying he will take care of me."