

South Texas: Broken heart and border blessings

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I have a broken heart. One of the things my student missions team did while on the field in South Texas was partner with Angel Tree, a ministry that allows inmates in prison to write a message to their children from prison. Through donations, Angel Tree sends each child a Christmas present. Our task was to wrap the presents, put the message from the incarcerated mother or father on it, and hand-deliver the present to the home of the children.



Student missionaries wrap Angel Tree gifts. (Photo courtesy of Halle Smith)

Recently, my family experienced something similar. About six months ago my brother-in-law was convicted of a crime and initially received a 10-year sentence, plus an additional 10 years of probation after that. My sister would have been responsible for taking care of their three kids—ages 3

months, 18 months and 3 years—with no job. God was gracious to our family, and he wasn't sent to jail. However, he had to go two months without being able to see his children, and that alone wrecked all of us.

I came down here to the Texas/Mexico border thinking I wouldn't be able to relate in any way to the people. I am not Hispanic, and I have never had to experience part of my family being stuck on the other side of the border.



Student missionaries deliver Angel Tree gifts. (Photo courtesy of Halle Smith)

But God knew why I was placed here. I was able to hand-deliver presents to children, knowing something about the pain of the mother—or father—and of the children receiving the gift. It's not something I can put into words. The pain of not having your parent. The pain of not getting to see your child or children. God used me—used my team—to bridge that gap between parent and child this week. And it gave me such a clear and beautiful image of how Jesus bridged the gap between us and our Father.

God was very gracious in what he did in my heart and in what he did for the families we were able to serve. It was nothing we did. God just used our hands to spread his hope and love to those who needed it this Christmas. We serve a wonderful God.

Halle Smith, a student at the University of Texas at Tyler, served with Go Now Missions in Mission, Texas, during Christmas break.