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Low Wages, Hard Labour: Yet Joy in the Lord!



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EUROPE, THE MIDDLE EAST AND LIBERIA

With a warm smile and a winsome personality, Sashi is part of a large invisible cohort of more than 300,000 'Maids' (domestic workers), labouring in Lebanese homes. I first met her in the home of a friend several years back. She has been working in Lebanon, almost as long as I and Dan had been ministering, fourteen years. However, our paths did not cross till 2009. Sashi came from Sri Lanka, a country with third largest contingent of young women working as 'maids' in Lebanon. Sixteen years back Sashi faced the ultimate shame and ignominy; being abandoned by her husband for another woman. She was left caring for two little children; a daughter and a son. With no viable alternative, Sashi left her children in the

care of her parents and came to Lebanon to work as a 'maid'. For most domestic workers, a typical day runs for about 13 work hours with no day off. Some lucky women manage to get a day off! Sashi worked hard, denied herself simple pleasures, saved and regularly sent home money to her parents; and for the care and education of her children.

Sashi is a member of a vibrant Tamil congregation that meets in a cramped building in a Beirut suburb. She loves the Lord strives hard to be a faithful disciple of Jesus, sometimes under challenging conditions. Sashi knows about my ministry among the maids. She comes and helps me cook a hot meal once a week that I prepare for about 40 to 50 women, at the Adlieh Detention Centre. Sometimes she surprises me; handing me money in an envelope, to be used towards the needs of women in prison! When I refuse to take her money, she says, "sister please let me bless these women with the blessings that God showers on me". I am constantly amazed by her generous heart and loving spirit!

Last week I got an email from Sashi from Beirut. Her letter exuded with excitement, and joy that burst out from the grateful heart of a mother. And what an accomplishment! Priya, her daughter, graduated from college with honours in Sri Lanka, and landed a job in a bank! She is absolutely certain, 'it is God's doing! And he has blessed my Priya!' I know the heart of a grateful mother, and I was so glad for both of them. Our God is a faithful God and I believe trusting prayers of a mother are never in vain. Sashi is looking forward to returning home in a couple of years. She took the ultimate risk of working for pittance as a maid in a foreign country, yielded herself completely into the hands of her Master, but relieved for certain that her darling Priya will never have to choose the vocation of her mother.

Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in His ways. When you eat the labour of your hands, you shall be happy, and it shall be well with you. Psalm 128:1-2