



Gene Meets Gene

Pastor Gene Schamko
Team member, HH Mission Trip

I met Gene at our first orphanage visit. He was 13 years old, but I would have thought he was much younger. About an hour into our visit, Gene pulled at my arm and led me away from the other children with whom I was playing baseball. He introduced himself to me by saying, "My name is Gene, too." He opened up his backpack and showed me all he had in it, pictures, a ball and some papers. These items, so proudly displayed, were his very own.

He wanted to throw the Frisbee, but only with me. For the rest of our time together, Gene would hold my hand. Wherever I would go, he would follow. At one point, he pulled me aside and said, "Gene, I want to give you something." He reached into his pocket and pulled out a half-eaten, melting, candy bar. It was taffy-covered with chocolate. I don't know where he got it, but I know it was something he valued. I told him that he need not give it to me; it was for him to enjoy. He insisted.

through the dining hall carrying boxes of ice cream that we had brought for each child, the tables had been set and daily rations of buckwheat were in each bowl. Gene said, "I love buckwheat, it's good, do you like it?" Inside, I was thinking, "I hate buckwheat, but not as much as I hate having to say goodbye to you." Before I could turn around and say my final farewell, Gene grabbed my arm and with excitement in his voice he said, "Gene, I've got to go eat. I can't be late." He scurried off into line. The last mental image I have of Gene is fidgeting around in line, no doubt anticipating a bowl of buckwheat and ice cream for dessert. I'm so glad that God, in His sovereignty, created 13 year-old boys with an appetite.

Two things came to mind about God that day. First, God is faithful to His Word to supply strength when I'm weak. Second, God is absolutely sovereign. He knew what Gene



Gene didn't speak much. His actions were more than what his words could convey. Could it be that he just wanted some personal attention . . . someone to call him his own, like his backpack and everything in it . . . someone to hold him close until he melts in their arms?

One of my greatest fears was the thought of saying "goodbye." As Gene and I walked

and I needed and He provided for us both from a bowl of buckwheat. I no longer have that half-eaten candy bar to remember Gene, nor can I give him my undivided attention. *I do have, however, a heavenly Father who is love, who is omniscient, who is omnipotent and who is faithful to hear my prayers for Gene, the 13 year-old Ukrainian boy whom I love, but whom God loves even more.*