

Naomi looks like a new person. Three months ago, she came to the Mercy Ship seeking help. She looked exhausted and heartbroken. But now, as she prepares to leave the hospital ship, she's completely transformed.

And she isn't even the one who had surgery.

# BABY GEORGE

Just after New Year's Day, 21-year-old Naomi gave birth to her first child. She named him after his father, George. Unfortunately "Baby George," as she called her son, was born with a cleft lip and palate — a common but frightening birth defect.

"I was scared, and I felt bad," Naomi said. Superstitious neighbors gave her a list of reasons why they thought George was born this way: that Naomi bathed at night, that she was a witch. Naomi sought a better answer, though, and when her son

was five days old, she brought him to the Mercy Ship. The doctors told Naomi to take her baby home and help him gain weight so he would be big enough for his corrective surgery in April.

Soon, it was time. They returned to the Mercy Ship, and George underwent an operation to correct his cleft lip. After a four-day stay on the ship's ward, they returned home. Naomi plans to come back in a year when

another Mercy Ship visits Liberia and George will receive a cleft palate surgery.

"I'm very happy," a beaming and hopeful Naomi stated, as she held her sleeping son; his tiny wrist was twice encircled by a bracelet that declared "JESUS LOVES ME."

"His father is very happy, too. His father, when I gave birth, he cried a lot. But now he's very happy."

