

Subject: Final update from October Uganda Evangelism/ophthalmology outreach.

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From: JD Bonner

Yesterday, I arrived home in time for Paula, Ian and I to take a boat ride across the lake for supper. It was for me a surreal moment riding into the sunset while we left behind another small wake from our boat that reminded me of the metaphor I used in one of the initial prayer letters for this trip. Just as the waves from a boat on the water set into motion those things along its path, God used this trip to stir up the waters on the path we took.

Sunday morning I was greeted with joyful shouting, singing and dancing as I arrived to teach Sunday School and preach at the church where Joseph is attending. In case you didn't read the update that I forwarded from Bob Hayes, Joseph is a 44 year old man whose vision had declined to barely perceiving light in both eyes. After he became blind, his wife had left with their children and Joseph had only been able to survive from the help of his mother. After his cataract surgery, his vision was restored to nearly normal and it should still be improving. Prior to his leaving the guest house to return to his village, Joseph had asked a translator to help him speak to Pastor Bob. He told Bob that he knew from the scriptures that Jesus had healed many blind people, but only one returned to thank him. Joseph said that he wanted to be one who gave thanks to God and that he would be looking for work with hopes of getting his family back. During the church service, he gave about a 10 minute testimony thanking God for his healing and thanking the Mpunge Presbyterian church for loving him enough to tell him about the outreach and take him there so that he could have surgery to restore his vision. He recounted how for years he had first gone to witchdoctors and then to charismatic healing services without ever getting help. He said that many people were now asking how he was able to walk down the street on his own, and he was telling them how God had provided a way for his healing. We embraced in front of the church to the cheers of the congregation, and I explained that God had orchestrated the circumstances of Joseph's healing by calling me to Uganda many years ago, then leading the way for churches to be started, relationships with local doctors and hospitals to develop, and the outreaches to be organized. During the service I preached from I John 1:5-10 that, "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." I was thankful our host pastors had moved me to this church so I could give the same message I used the previous week, without so much preparation time, and with a little more polished delivery. You all know the passage concludes in verse 9 with the promise of forgiveness and cleansing from all unrighteousness if we confess our sins. The pastor issued an altar call and another 5 people publicly confessed their need for and belief in Christ as their Savior. Please remember to pray for Joseph and the newborns in Christ.

At the church at Kiyoola, a lady gave a testimony that she had been warned by others to not go with our team for surgery because we were going to not do anything for her eyes, but instead eat her. This may seem far fetched to us, but I have visited a village in that area that I am told still practices cannibalism. She said that she was thankful to have been well cared for and have her vision restored. I wonder how many may have not come because of these warnings. Others from the church in Mpunge said they couldn't make the long journey.

Earlier in the week, I mentioned Agnes, who I have since learned is really 14 years old. Her vision was limited to counting fingers at 1 foot in both eyes. After 2 surgeries on 1 eye and one on the other, her vision had improved to nearly normal in one eye and she could see the large E on the eye chart with the other when I left. I was able to spend a little time talking and praying with her and learned that both of her parents had died while she was losing her vision and her brother had been taking care of her. We had previously learned she had to drop out of school, was staying by herself in a hut all day, and was not getting regular meals. Pastor Aaron has taken special note of her and will see that she gets food for the time being. We have worked it out for her to begin school again as a boarding student at the school run by the church at Kiyoola when the new school year starts in

February.

I was also especially encouraged by the comments of a muslim patient, Hajji - both the name given by his parents and title for having traveled to Mecca. He was very thankful to have his vision restored and was amazed at the kindness christians had expressed to him during the week and was considering the concept of being born again.

As expected there were also many we could not heal due to permanent optic nerve or retinal damage. Pray for them as well that their circumstances may draw them to God for eternal healing, and that he would give them grace to endure for now. On many occasions, I have felt led to speak in Uganda from Acts 17:26-27 because it reminds us that God has determined the time and physical boundaries of the nations (and I think also individuals) so, "that they would seek God, that they might feel their way toward him and find Him." That is my prayer for those we could not help, and it was a message that resonated well with the Senior Staff of Mengo Hospital when I spoke to them on Wednesday mentioning this passage in the context of their nations' s celebration of 50 years of independence.

As we crossed the wake of other boats last evening, Ian would say, "bump, bump" as our boat bounced from the wake they left behind. This is a reminder to me to pray for those daily criss crossing and making spiritual waves in the Ntenjeru subdistrict of Uganda as the Presbyterian Church of Uganda is soon to begin its 5th of 10 anticipated church plants. I was told by the Pastors Kefa Sempangi and Rashid Luswa that the rate limiting factor for church growth in the area is training local men for leadership. For that reason I am thankful for the work of MTW in providing training for pastors through Westminster Theological Seminary. Please pray for Pastor Aaron who completed his diploma there a couple years ago and is obviously gifted in pastoring at Ntenjeru Presbyterian Church. Pray for Robert who also helped our team both weeks and has just begun his Master of Divinity program there. He hopes to both pastor and go on to be a faculty member at Westminster. Pray also for Michael and Moses who also worked with our team and are now the youngest Elders in the PCU.

Finally, I pray that as you have so diligently prayed for our team, that you would ask God if He would have you and others you know go to Uganda. Truly the harvest is plentiful and the workers are few in that country and those surrounding it in East Africa. As long as God has me going and coming on multiple short term trips, I pray that I would create some waves here in America that propel others to go join in the labor there. Please consider also if God would be calling you to giving financially toward the work there. The church at Kiyoola still meets without a roof and the one over the school rooms leak. You can imagine plenty of similar needs at the other 3 church plants.

Many thanks again for your diligent prayers. Please contact me if God is leading you to give or go.

In Him,

J. D. Bonner, M.D., FAAO