



LADIES LEARN AT LIFE ESSENTIALS CENTRE

“Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut...” Rev 3:8 NASB

In my 50 years as a Christ-follower, I had never so dramatically experienced the reality of this verse until this visit to Uganda...it all started with my coffee.

With only three weeks in Uganda this time, Marty had scheduled every event with precision...a real challenge in a country that treasures slow paced lifestyle that seemingly resists organization. Squeezing two separate pastor training sessions, two women's development sessions, one primary school training, one visit to our refugee radio station and multiple site visits to agricultural projects into our limited space, we only had one day where nothing demanded our attention.

So, I learned to treasure every quiet moment and my early morning coffee was one of them. But, on my second sip, I heard a knock on our metal gate near the education building. It was 8:00 AM and the scheduled class of 25 women was for 10:00 AM...*who could that be?*

Sure enough, it was the women and their babies arriving early. *Somehow* they heard if they came early, they *might* get breakfast and when that thought got out there, it rallied the ladies from two villages. And they just kept coming, moving our cook to send out a boda into the nearby trading centre to buy food...lots of food. By now the scheduled 25 became 64; I stopped counting because they were a moving target. It is surprising how fast mothers and babies can be!

Soon we had a party atmosphere that now included village and government leaders alike. And in true African fashion, every leader must “greet” everyone in not-so-short speeches. Three hours later, our team was ready to teach the much-desired knitting. Needles alone are difficult to find much less the training how to use them or the yarn itself. Every family had members who wanted scarves to keep them warm during the rainy seasons when temperature drops, so every person was focused, including the village chairman, a Muslim and practising witch doctor, along with his Muslim vice chairman. Both men had women in the class...the moment was ready for our team.

DYING DORCAS

Our teaching team is also our cooking team and our cleaning team. But they are also our worship team and our drama team. We have an unusual and very committed ministry team. This moment was for our drama team to present Dorcas (see Acts 9) a unique woman committed to good works like sewing for poor. In the Biblical version, Dorcas had passed and the focus was on her resurrection. However, in our drama, Dorcas' good works were displayed at length, and her passing certainly became an event.

Dorcas (Sarah) took a long time to die, convincing some she may not be acting. In fact, Sarah later recounted when she lay under the sheet covering her until “Peter” could pray her back to life, she could hear the ladies nearby “*Is she coming back?*” Another whispered “*I hope she comes back.*” (Clearly, not all had read the Bible account). And then she did-Muslim and Christian ladies alike all clapped. In true African fashion there was praise and worship in Lugandan, witnessing to all, the power of a loving God, followed by a Scripture reading. The village chairman and vice chairman heard everything as did the many village ladies under their leadership. It was a dramatic reminder of the power of a real God available in a place where witchcraft sought control through fear for so long.

PASTOR GODFREY'S TRUE LIGHT CHURCH BEFORE THE STORM



Finally, the largest knitting class I have ever seen broke out; needles clicked constantly. Our guards asked for training so they joined in as did Pastor Godfrey, arriving just after his church collapsed. His focus was to learn to knit so he could teach others...and he did. This ancient practice dates back to at least the days when King Hiram sent people to King Solomon who were skilled in a number of specialties including those who could work with "crimson yarn" (2 Chr 2:14 HCSB)...we were right in line with biblical practice.

DOORMAT MAKING NEXT DAY

Normally seen as a fun craft here, making mats from scrap material is considered an employment opportunity in much of Uganda. So, as we were still catching our collective breath from knitting day, we were surprised again at the strong interest in mat making.

And after yesterday's clear gospel presentation, we anticipated a little resistance from village leaders, but to our surprise, the ladies showed up again as did the vice chairman. And like yesterday, we tried to manage the volume but only when we promised a future second class could we get the crowd to manageable numbers. After a time of worship, the ladies focused.

The process is cost effective, making it within reach for all, but it is labor intensive. After a brief training, every woman (and guard) started. I had never seen a group of women, normally very chatty, now work quietly and without distraction...for 3 ½ hours until lunch arrived.

MINISTRY TEAM

And then our team joined Pastor Godfrey in ministering the Word of God to these precious village women. Marty made it so clear there is a choice to be made...and two did just that! What a unique and precious moment to see these two women choose to follow Jesus, triggering a party in heaven *"In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."* Luke 15:10 NASB, as well as one at our Life Essentials centre!

After watching all of this, the village vice chairman concluded with remarks of gratitude, reminding me that at the moment we do have an open door in that village, and no man will shut it without permission from heaven...this is our moment indeed.

PASTOR GODFREY

As Marty gave Bibles to both new believers, Pastor Godfrey looked on, clearly basking in the joy of the Lord. I understood why!

(Young) Godfrey had left this village for a better life elsewhere...anywhere. But then he met Christ and immediately surrendered his present and his future, asking God what is it that He wished from him. He did not wait long. His father had chosen that time to distribute his small life savings among his children and Godfrey was given the family land as his inheritance. It just happened to be in his birth village.

By now, Godfrey was sensing something...so he tested the waters a little, asking the Lord what to do next. The answer was so clear-his mind flooded with a need to start a church in the middle of this Muslim community where witchcraft dominated life.

It was not easy. There was no money; no building; very few believers to help or pray for a church that no one wanted. And yet Godfrey felt he should live offsite in a small house so this family inheritance could be fully dedicated to serving the Lord and the community through a church.

He began with church services in the family field as he constructed a small ministry classroom where he taught village women the skill of sewing with two pedal machines he managed to buy from his meagre income as a boda driver. Boda driving is itself a risky job; Ugandan medical staff tell us the largest challenge on emergency care is the many injuries created by boda accidents.

But Godfrey is a humble man who does whatever he can to provide for his family and his church-even risking his life as a boda taxi driver during the week so he can minister on weekends. For 8 years, Godfrey worked and ministered and saved until he could finally raise a makeshift church of roof sheets attached to wood poles. That is when we met him.

It was at this time (Nov 2023) when we originally provided sanitary pad training for the village women and with the agreement of the Muslim chairman and vice chairman, it was held in Godfrey's new church since it was large enough to accommodate all. It was in this place where our drama team presented the Biblical account of the woman with the issue of blood and who was healed, in front of the village witch doctor who was paid to heal through his practices. Since that original gospel presentation, we have just had two more with no resistance...that is an open door from the Lord!

CHURCH ON THE GROUND

And now only a few months after that first encounter in Godfrey's church, we discovered he has suffered a major blow to his ministry there.

Poverty necessitated the church roof structure be built on wooden poles. Even after many years of saving Godfrey could not afford concrete, so wood poles were selected. But no one considered the power of the little termite. Over time, termites ate the strength out of the poles and when a big wind storm arrived, the entire structure fell on the ground, effectively stopping church in this still-witchcraft dominated village. We had first seen this in South Sudan; a classroom fell on children when termites ate through the wood support poles. And we witnessed this again in Nakyessa School when our partner built a classroom roof. Within only weeks, small bits of wood were seen on the ground and the roof itself began to sag, creating a safety challenge.





1 CHRISTINE DEMONSTRATES KNITTING

2 HERE THEY COME

3 BREAKFAST FOR 64

4 PETER PRAYING FOR DORCAS

5 CELEBRATION WHEN DORCAS COMES BACK

6 LEARNING TOGETHER

7 BIBLE READING TO VILLAGE AND LEADERS

8 MARTY INTRODUCES DOORMAT MAKING

9 EVERYONE BUSY

10 TWO WOMEN FIND CHRIST

ANSWER

We have constructed well over 40 buildings in Uganda and have come to know the only safe and effective method is concrete and steel. Both resist the elements and the insects.

I considered how the Lord has placed Godfrey in the right spot for His purposes; I considered how we found ourselves first ministering in his church (before it fell) and I considered how we both find ourselves ministering to the same people caught in the clutches of evil.

And I considered the present challenges we have with radio and how the people of God had stood with us, bringing us slowly out of that terrible fog (thank you). What a blessing to see those gifts arrive so we could buy and repair the equipment necessary to keep all radio on the air.

AGAIN?

So, I really struggled with making another "ask", especially when our friends have stood strong lately. But I just cannot turn away from the village or the opportunity there, especially since it seems the Lord Himself has opened that door-for now.

So, I called our Ugandan construction engineer for a quote to build a strong concrete foundation together with concrete pillars, all reinforced by a concrete top "ring beam" which holds it all together. Once constructed, Pastor Godfrey could put his roof sheets back on and as his income increases over time, he might fill the space between the pillars with bricks, completing the church.

But for now, the skeleton could be erected, enabling open-air church to resume, quieting the mocking that is currently aimed at Pastor Godfrey, just as the enemy had done to Nehemiah when he rebuilt the wall (Neh 2:19). But the wall **was** rebuilt and the church must be also.

The cost is \$6,500 USD for the new church structure.

I would very much appreciate prayer support for this as the Lord calls His people to action!

Don

11 PASTOR GODFREY LEARNS TO KNIT

12 TRUE LIGHT CHURCH ROOF COLLAPSED



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