

3/30/20

Dear friends, family, and supporters in America,
Greetings from Jinja, Uganda.



AFLC World Missions is posting weekly updates from the missionaries on how COVID-19 is impacting our fields, including prayer requests. Please join us at <https://www.aflcworldmissions.org/missionary-covid-updates/> and join in our prayer effort.

One of the five petitions posted from Uganda is that the Lord might provide us spirit-attentiveness in discerning ways to best serve in this time. God has already been answering this prayer for my good friends and co-teachers, Momma Nissi, Alex and his wife, Mary, who share a home just around the corner from me. For instance, they are collecting resources to aid their church members confronted by sudden unemployment and rising food prices. God has also dropped an opportunity right into their home in the midst of the quarantine. My opportunity to share it comes fresh to you from yesterday...

Let me paint in the context: I am now joining the many of you who are missing seeing our church families Sunday mornings. We met in small cell groups last Sunday, but the evolving situation this last week led our elders to turn to simple family worship. For me, that means hunting up myself a family or engaging in my corporate worship as a party of one. Pastor Alex was kind enough to adopt me for this week, and I had the chance to be introduced to the recently added fifth member of his household.

His name was Jireh. He is twenty-one. He was brought to Alex's home by his mother. "Please, pastor, I ask you to do what you can for him." Since his arrival, Jireh has been committed to the scholastic studies that many Ugandan youth are completing while the schools are closed. Our morning worship included a time of testimony, and I had the chance to hear Jireh's story in his own words.

When Jireh was fifteen, he was a drug user. He often attended his classes under their influence. He was also a dealer. His customers were children. But one day, he explained, "God sent Ammonites."

The sudden biblical reference made us laugh. The preceding Sunday at Alex's home had taken lessons from the book of Judges (specifically, I think, the story of Jephthah), and the Ammonites had made a lasting impression on Jireh.

The "Ammonites" pressured Jireh into a vehicle. Once inside, he realized too late that the men inside were uniformed. He was brought to an unknown location. He was informed that word had gotten around that he was "spoiling the children." In the days that followed, he was routinely beaten on his joints, caned, fed terrible food, and forced to perform painful exercises. Eventually, he was released.

I suspect his captors had taken mercy on him because of his youth. Had Jireh been officially brought to court, drug dealing to children is a sentence of fifteen years. This was Uganda's slap on the wrist. Mary kindly pointed out that a fifteen-year sentence would have made Jireh "even older than Michael" by the time he was released. Everyone took a moment to laugh at this thought.

Jireh explained the experience was the worst and most traumatic experience of his life, and it had three distinct effects: 1) That he would never deal drugs again, 2) That he possessed hatred for the man who had beat him, and 3) That he was angry with God who had allowed this to happen “to one of His children.” He was angry God had brought this on himself rather than another.

Alex invited each of us to respond to Jireh’s testimony with a word from Scripture. Mary allowed Alex to share on her behalf. Momma Nissi shared the story of the prodigal son, and how the Father wanted his boy back as his son rather than a servant. I shared the story of Isaac so that he might hear (for the first time, he said) the origin of his name. When Isaac asked Abraham, “Where is the sacrifice?” Abraham responded, “Jehovah-Jireh (The Lord will provide).” God had already truly fulfilled Jireh’s angry desire. The heavenly wrath in store for our sins was given to Jesus instead of sinners. Alex explained how God sent Ammonites in the Old Testament only as a way to bring his people repentance and salvation.

Alex had chosen the story of Absalom for our morning worship with Jireh’s situation in mind. Alex and I had recently finished that story in our studies together. We began with Amnon’s rape of Tamar which created Absalom’s spirit of hatred. We looked at how this led to Absalom’s desire to ignite his country in war, seek the life and throne of his father, and rape his father’s concubines on the palace roof. Then we focused on 2 Samuel 18:33 and 19:6 (please take a moment to look them up!). We compared David’s love to God’s. The tragedy of Absalom was his refusal to seek his father’s offered protection which led to his demise with Joab. We spoke about how God indeed longed to die instead of us and went to the cross. We spoke of how the heavenly father loved us who had nothing but hate for Him to the extent of (to quote Joab) “hating” His own Son who had nothing but love for Him. God is a God who leaves the ninety-nine obedient sheep to pursue the rebel sheep who has gone out among the wolves. This is good news because I, Michael, am that rebel sheep.

Jireh didn’t choose to share many words in response to this yesterday. Please pray for these seeds.

And please continue to pray that the Lord will provide your missionaries spirit-attentiveness in discerning ways to best serve in this time. If this is also a prayer for you and your household, the Lord will provide in due time. Perhaps the Lord will provide a drug dealer to live at your home.

God’s Blessings,

Michael Rokenbrodt

In front of their home, Momma Nissi and Alex are in blue. Mary is in brown. (Anne in red is one of my co-teacher on Sundays.)





[Click here for Printable PDF](#)

Go to the [AFLC World Missions](#) website for more information and to [donate](#)

©2020 Association of Free Lutheran Congregations | Karenga, Uganda

[Web Version](#) [Preferences](#) [Forward](#) [Unsubscribe](#)