



Uganda Missions Trip Update

Alongside Ministries engaged a two week mission trip to Uganda Africa from June.2nd to 17th, 2011. During the two weeks we spent there as a team, we were involved in various projects, consisting of medical clinics, constructing a second school, and various projects that helped the progression of tasks to be completed. Spending two weeks in Uganda was not only a blessing in my eyes but a privilege. God could have chosen any 12 people to go on this trip, yet he chose us. I often wonder why it is God allows me to see what He sees every day. Not only was this trip an amazing experience, it was also the answer to several prayers.

The Team in Lira Uganda, June 2011



Thoughts & Experiences:

Before having actually gone on this mission trip, I was asked if I would be willing to share about my experiences as well as the group's experience having spent two weeks in Uganda. I thought it would be easy to share about the lessons God taught us, yet here I am finding it rather difficult. If you were to ask me about my trip to Uganda I could spend countless hours sharing about the amazing events that occurred and lessons I learned. Yet, when being asked to write about it, I find it difficult. Maybe it's because I just don't quite understand what it is God has shown me yet. However, having spent a couple hours in prayer, I feel God has placed something on my heart that I should share.

Lord, I spent two weeks working among those who had nothing in Barlonyo. These people witnessed a massacre, were hurt or tortured, children lost parents, parents lost children. Suffering became a normal routine for these people. Illnesses that are easily treatable in Canada put men, women, and children's lives in danger. There are primarily two reasons for this: 1. they don't have access to good medical care and 2. they cannot afford to pay for medical expenses.

One thing I have often wondered about is why I was blessed into a wonderful, loving family, in a peaceful country where I have access to not only all of my needs, but also my wants. Why wasn't I born in Barlonyo, or have to suffer or lose loved ones in a massacre? I know that I have experienced suffering before but not nearly to the extent as the people of Barlonyo.

What really confuses me more than anything is how these people have nothing, yet they rejoice and give to the Lord what little they do have. These people were so inspiring to me; I could not get over how positive their attitudes were after everything they have been through.

I know that if I were in their situation, I would probably be a little bitter. It would take me awhile to figure out why God would allow such things to happen, yet that would be wrong of me, because I should have enough faith to not have to question an almighty and powerful God. The people of Uganda seemed to stand firm in their faith, they trust the Lord with all of their hearts, and surrender their lives to Christ everyday allowing Him to be in complete control. A question that continually popped up into my head was how are these people so strong? They showed very little emotion, almost as if what they had been through is something that's normal. I know it's part of their culture to be strong, and not let emotions get the best of you, yet it's one thing to be told that, and another to be able to live up to those expectations.

A lot of people that I met and talked to reminded me of Job. These people are good and love the Lord. Like Job, these people lost their children, possessions and health. Even though Job felt like God was being unfair, he refused to turn against Him. Like Job these people had done nothing to deserve the suffering they have experienced and yet they continue to wait patiently for God to show them His plan for their lives. When we look at our situations it's so easy to only see the here and now, yet God can see way beyond that and the people of Uganda understand that and actually live it out.

Highlight of the Trip:

One of my highlights that I got to experience on the trip was visiting the government office in Lira with Vicki, Sharon, and David. There we had the opportunity to visit the government building and talk to the speaker and the president of the district. We were able to inform them the reason for us being in Uganda. We explained how we were an organization from Canada that comes alongside church groups around the world to assist them in running various projects that will

help with the redevelopment of countries that are dealing with the aftermath of wars, famine, disease, etc.

The church that we were blessed to work alongside with was known as Victory Outreach Ministries (VOM). When we mentioned this to the president of the district he was very pleased to hear that the Ugandan people were running the projects, and that we were only there to assist them. I was very surprised to hear that the president wanted his people to be running the projects, and us there only to assist them. Why would this be the case? Wouldn't they rather us just come in build them what they need so they have it, and us carry on elsewhere? With all these thoughts running through my mind, he continued to emphasize the importance of them organizing and running the projects.

As we continued to talk, we learned more about the president and his priorities. He responded well to our explanation of our presence in his country, but what his response to us was is truly what impacted me the most on this entire trip. He was thankful for each and every one of us taking the time to step aside from our busy and crazy lives in Canada to come work with the people of Uganda. However, he was even more thankful for our willingness to follow the instructions of the locals as they ran the projects and the fact that we were a Christian based organization. He said that volunteers have come to help out numerous times, building schools, and medical clinics, but when the locals are not involved with the project, the buildings that are constructed will only be used for a short period of time. The reason for this is because they are unfamiliar with it and are not entirely sure what it's supposed to be used for. So after the group of volunteers leave and go home, the building soon becomes abandoned and no one uses it again. Also, something that really encouraged me was when he said that if God isn't involved in the project, it's not going to grow or last.

However, if you allow the locals to run the projects, and you assist them to get the projects done faster, they are aware of what it is being

done in their country as well as feel in control of the situation. They also learn how to continually run various projects on their own, and continue the ones that have been started. If you involve God in the plans as well, if it is His will, you know your plans will succeed. It reminded me of a verse found in Proverbs 16:3, “Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.”

Take a look at the picture below, I took what the president said, and made an interpretation out of it.

The foundation of the second school that is being built in Barlonyo Uganda



What is the most important element when it comes to constructing a building? It's the foundation; without out, the building wouldn't last, and all the effort you put into constructing it will have been wasted because you forgot the most important element. However, if you build with God being your foundation, and remember the verse found in Proverbs 16:3, God will help you to be successful, and allow your project to grow with morals, ethics, and standards. This is what the president of Lira believed, that if we allow God to take control of our lives, and we put our trust in Him and have a little faith He will not only provide for your own needs, but for the needs of your country as well. What an awesome thought of mind, and an incredible stand of faith to take in order to run your country.

The Speaker and President of the District that we talked to at the Government building



I think the visit was a success, but also a blessing to hear how faithful even the Government is to God there. I wonder what the world would be like if everyone went to God for their needs.

The Pharmacy

During the two weeks I spent in Uganda, I was assigned to work in the pharmacy. I was pretty excited to have the opportunity to experience what it's like working alongside doctors in Africa. Each day was very similar, the work was repetitive, yet it had to be done. It amazed me how many prescriptions got filled each day, and how incredibly patient the people were waiting for the prescriptions. There were some days that we had so many prescriptions to fill, we couldn't complete them all, so people that waited for several hours that day for their prescriptions actually spent the night there, sleeping on the cement floors because they had travelled such a far distance to seek medical attention.

Could you imagine if that happened here? We would be furious, and have a lot of complaints to make, yet these people were so humble and thankful to be able to get medical treatment they would have waited as long as it took to get what they needed for the children and their families.

Some medical statistics that were calculated are as follows:

Total Number of Patients: 1603

Number of Patients treated for Malaria: 541

Number of Patients treated for Resp. Infections: 569

Number of Patients treated for Skin Infections: 77

Number of Patients treated for Joint/Muscle: 184

Number of Patients treated for GI: 81

Number of Patients treated for Worms/Parasite: 389

Number of Patients treated for ENT/Mouth: 70

Number of Patients treated for GU: 290

From the statistics listed above, it can be seen how many patients there were that had prescriptions filled, as well as for what was being treated. It amazes me to think that in two weeks all of these people were able to get treatment to relieve some of their symptoms. It must be by the grace of God.

The set up for the pharmacy in Barlonyo Uganda



Challenges

Each day I spent in Uganda came with an amazing experience. It was so easy to see God's love touch the people there, yet every night I found myself calling out to God to show me why it was He called me

half way around the world. Don't get me wrong, I know the actions I was living out there were impacting the locals immensely, yet I knew God had more to show me. My prayers often consisted of me asking God to give me a servant's heart, and to make me flexible and willing to do any jobs that were asked of me. I wanted to be overwhelmed in Him, and I wanted God to be my focus; the centre of my life.

The hardest challenge that I experienced was the fear of not giving enough effort. The days we worked were long, and some days were very hot. You're in a different country, outside of your comfort zone, sleep deprived, (because you've been in 3 different time zones, in the matter of a week), food is different, there are just a lot of factors that makes the trip challenging. I didn't want to find myself doing the bare minimum there, I wanted to step outside my comfort zone, and try anything that was asked of me. With a lot of prayer, God did give each and every one of us the strength and endurance to carry through each day, giving all of our effort, and doing the tasks to the best of our abilities. It wasn't always easy work, and I won't lie, not all of the jobs were fun, but knowing that God has called you to do His work there made every effort you put in completely worth it.

After spending two weeks there, you think that your challenges are finally coming to an end; however the next challenge is just beginning. Coming home after being on a trip like this can be extremely difficult. You have just experienced God in a way like never before, you made friendships that have changed your life, and your eyes have seen the poverty that we don't know about in our blessed country, you have so many emotions running through your mind. The first thing you want to do when you get home is tell everyone about all the experiences you had, and how absolutely incredible the trip was. However, people are going to be completely confused, and not understand your excitement. No matter how descriptive you make your stories, it just doesn't compare to the real thing. The challenge is to be patient with the people back at home. You can't get mad or frustrated with them for not understanding the things you're telling

them believe me, at times you will feel incredibly frustrated, but remember to stay patient. Also you will want to spend a lot of time in prayer, asking God to lead you in the right direction.

Since being home, I have felt God leading me into further educational studies, primarily in the pharmaceutical field. I absolutely loved having the opportunity to work in the pharmacy there, and enjoyed learning how to do the job. I'm hoping if this is what God wants for my life, maybe someday I will be able to go on future mission trips, this time being able to take the knowledge I've learned having completed pharmaceutical courses and continue to help run medical clinics. At the time when I was in Uganda, I did not see this coming, yet I felt there was still more. I believe this might be the more that I was looking for, and I am super blessed to have had the opportunity to work with Alongside Ministries this summer.

I encourage you to ask God where He wants you, and what it is He wants you to do with your life. "This is what the Lord God say, your redeemer the Holy one of Israel, I am the Lord your God who knows what's best for you, who directs you in the way you should go." Isaiah 48:17 God knows what is best for us, so let's put our trust in Him and obey what He asks of us.