

Between Jesus and the stone – there is no contest!



In the bush of Tanzania, two years ago, we spotted a woman wearing a T-shirt that said: TEXAS A&M. Got our attention! John, a native born and bred Texan, asked if he could take her picture. Later the same woman was in our pilot Oral Learner Teachers class in Oldonyo Sambu, where the District Superintendent of Arusha, Bishop Joshua pastors. It was prophetic. Our life and Joyce's were on a parallel track. And, sure enough, when we returned to Tanzania, a year later with the MegaVoice players and Scriptpix.....

Joyce attended the first Oral Learner Teacher training in Oldonyo Sambu last March. She was an eager student and graduated with an Oral Learners Initiative Training certificate. We sent her out **armed and dangerous** with a bag of materials to win the lost. The bag contained a MegaVoice MP3 player with 12 evangelism lessons and the New Testament in the Maasai language. (This is very unusual because everything they have is in Swahili, the trade language). It also included large Scriptpix for the teacher and 50 sets of small student cards for Scripture memorization. John and Bishop Joshua anointed, commissioned, and prayed for her and 20 other students.

With the encouragement and blessing of Bishop Joshua, she went to an area of Maasai land which the Gospel had not penetrated. Although Joyce is not Maasai herself, her father is and she speaks a bit. Joyce knew the teacher on the MegaVoice spoke Maasai, so she just had to be the facilitator. She began to invite a few women in the bomas to share the lessons. Some of the women accepted Jesus as the Son of God and were saved. Several of them were very sick and God healed them. In these villages, a healed, walking new convert is mobile publicity! It so reminds me of Jesus time, when people left healed, delivered, set free and they went out spreading the word. As you might guess, more students came to the study the lessons with Joyce.



Joyce discovered that evangelism is hard, costly, exhausting. Especially in Africa where she covered long distances walking, spent far too much on pikipikis. (small motorbikes used as taxis) Finally she met with her Pastor, Bishop Joshua, and said she was too tired and she must quit. Joshua was born the most positive and full-of-faith person in the world. In fact, like Jesus, he has experienced the pain and suffering that others are going through and he understands! So he responded, "No, you will not quit...because I will pray for you." (I'll tell the story of Joshua in a future blog.)

Bishop Joshua arranged to meet together with the group of believer women for two days of fasting and prayer. They would seek God for strength, renewal, and a breakthrough in this hostile and resistant area. So they met at a little church nearby to seek God.

One of the women was late, and she took a bus to where she would walk several kilometers to the fasting and prayer retreat. As she was walking, she saw a young girl along the road in the bush. The girl was filthy, wild-eyed, half-starved, crazy. The Holy Spirit prompted her to stop and help the girl. Realizing the girl was not only dirty and hungry, but demon possessed and separated from her family, she knew she needed help. Not sure what to do, she reached for her cell phone and called Bishop Joshua. (Cell phones are cheap and prolific in Africa. It is the only 'lifeline' people have with the rest of the world. Even in the most remote areas, the Maasai carry cell phones.) After determining that the lost girl was not aggressive, Joshua said, "Stay with her and I will come in my truck."

Together they loaded her into the truck and took her to where the small group of believers was gathered for prayer. After several days of fasting and prayer, the demons came out of the girl. She was delivered, set free. And Jesus came with His peace. Joshua smiled when he told us, "After all, the Bible says that 'Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost.'"

The girl's name was Naishiye (Nah-ee-she-yay). Even when the evil spirits were gone and she



could think more clearly, Naishiye had no idea where to find her family. The women fed and cared for her and began asking in the village where she belonged. They learned that her family lived in a village nearby at the foot of Mt. Meru and she had been missing for over a month. Word was sent to the family that the girl was being brought home. She had been missing more than a month, lost in the bush, without food, shelter or water, so her family assumed they were receiving a body. The village prepared for a burial. They were completely shocked when the Christian women brought the girl alive and well, with her mind and spirit

restored by the power of God! Everyone for many kilometers heard of the miracle of this Jesus.

The village Elders were in awe of the power of God. They decided to reward the group and appease the spirits by offering the Christians a small meeting place. Although the Elders were not believers in Jesus, they certainly did not want to oppose a God whose power was so obvious!

A very important man and his seven wives, children, and cattle had a large nearby boma. The man and two of his wives had died of disease and now the rest of the wives and children were all very sick, some demon possessed. The formerly successful boma, with its seven stick and dung 'wife-houses' and larger adobe 'man-house,' was now seriously dilapidated, rotting, and destitute. The remaining widows and children were living in squalor, full of disease, without food, no hope,

broken in mind and spirit. So the Elders said the Christians could use the 'man-house' for worshipping their God.

Undaunted by the diseased inhabitants and the deplorable condition of the boma, Joyce and the new converts entered the boma and laid hands on the sick women and children. They prayed for deliverance from the demons. God healed and delivered 18 of them!

This boma was part of the Wa-arush Maasai, who worship a large stone brought in and positioned in the center of the corral/courtyard. This stone is worshipped, receives milk offerings, and is their 'god.' The Christians decided the false god had to go. So, the fledgling 'congregation' dug it out of the ground and cast it outside of the boma walls. They re-claimed the territory the enemy had taken. They proclaimed this the Losinoni TAG church, the church of Jesus Christ.



Then Joyce began to teach them about life with Jesus from the lessons on the MegaVoice. Every week they listened to the lessons and learned the Scriptures. They prayed for God to provide for the nearly starving women and children still living in the 'wife houses.' Miraculously, one day a truck bounced down the rough dirt road and left 20 bags of maize at their boma!



Pastor Joyce on new Church property

God continued to add souls weekly to the church. The group is now over 40 men and women, plus children. In this area, it is impossible to obtain land for a church. So when the group outgrew the 'man-house,' they appealed to the village Elders. They agreed to allow them to meet outside, in the boma enclosure. One Elder decided to give land (several acres) for a church to be built on. He is an old man, know as Babu (grandfather) to Joyce. Sometimes he comes to a service.

Every Sunday Joyce spends the equivalent of a full days wages (\$3.00) to ride a pikipiki. She has no pastoral training, no sermons, and just a little of the Maasai language. Hakuna matata! No problem! Because the teacher is on the MegaVoice in their own language, Maasai. They listen,

they learn. They memorize Scripture with the Scriptpix. In Maasai tradition, they sing, dance, pray, testify, and worship – as the goats and chickens walk through the boma.

Last Sunday we were the guests of honor at Losinoni Engikaret. It was, without a doubt, the MOST AMAZING SUNDAY of our life. Joyce, Bishop Joshua, and a women's choir from the Oldonyo



Sambu church were all there. The village Elders were invited to see the Mzungus and Bishop. They arrived in their tribal attire, with clubs, and sticks. They sat in front, next to us, on a rough wooden bench in all their regalia. There was singing, dancing. Naishiye testified of the power of God. Several other women testified and told stories of God's amazing provision.

The choir sang and danced. One of the songs was: *We will go to the mountain of our God, because the*

Devil will not come to us there. Another song was: *God is so good, why don't you come and try him out.* Then they sang: *You are a wonderful God, you have allowed us to see the white man (mzungus) today.* (What a hoot!)

And us? We sat transfixed at what God is doing.

Five months ago, Pastor Joyce was one of the rare and cherished female students in our Oral Learner Teacher training - in a culture where women are not respected and seldom are allowed or enabled to do anything of importance. We had given her some instructions and some seed – a bag of materials. In five months she had sown, watered, and cultivated the seed – and in very dry, hard, rocky, infested soil. We arrived just in time for harvest! Indeed some sow and others reap! On this Sunday we sat in a growing congregation of believers - next to the village Elders who had not yet made a commitment to Jesus, but were in awe of His mighty power!

As the service ended, Joyce looked directly at the Elders. Quietly and respectfully she said, "We are going to heaven. Would you like to come with us?"

Our hearts soared as the Elders indicated they did indeed want to go heaven. She asked if they would pray and receive Jesus. They said, "Not now, but later. But don't worry. **Between Jesus and the stone -- there is no contest!**"



Epilogue

Pastor Joyce will take her MegaVoice and Scriptpix when she visits the Elders. She said, “They will hear how they can go to heaven with us. I will show them that Jesus is the way!” The Elders are the most respected people in this culture, so the entire village will change! They will influence the entire village to go to the Losinoni TAG. Joyce will have many open doors. And they too will be with us in heaven!



Elder on his cell phone

Some things we know for absolute certain.

1. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost.
2. Nothing is impossible with God!
3. Between Jesus and the stone – there is no contest!

Grateful to God for allowing us to share in this miracle!

John and Ruth



Oral Learners Initiative