

“Oh that men would praise the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness” (Psalm 107 : 8-9)

Rwanda MAG December 2019: Youth Camps and Children’s Bible Class

I (Jackie) have been contemplating on the words I read from “streams in desert” devotional that says “Nothing so pleases God in connection with our prayer and our praise, and nothing so blesses the man who prays as the praise which he offers”. These words really resonated with my current appreciation of God’s faithfulness and grace that we experienced once again while in Kigali, Rwanda. We went as a group of four young adults: Abigail Vedder (USA), Jackie Bagwiza (Canada), Stephanie Reeh (Germany), and David Moy de Vitry (Switzerland) to support local brethren in Kigali in organising and leading youth camps that took place from the 23rd to the 28th of December 2019. As we had asked for prayers, it is with a thankful heart that we would like to share some updates on the Lord’s work in Rwanda as thanksgiving and praise to our blessed Lord and Saviour.

The purpose of our trip:

- To lead girls’ and boys’ camps: Girls’ Camp took place the 23rd to 25th followed by Boys’ Camp the 26th to 28th of December.
- Home visits and fellowship with brethren families.
- Gospel meeting with Sponsored Children and home visits.
- Sisters’ meeting in Nyamata with group studies.
- Youth meetings in Kigali and Kamembe.
- To teach some hymns from the Spiritual Songs hymn book.
- Gospel outreach in the communities surrounding the Bible Center in the Kimisagara sector.

Girls’ Camp 23rd to 25th December 2019

We arrived in Kigali in the evening of the 21st of December to a warm welcome by sister Godelive and Winfred, who are responsible for all coordination of the girls’ camp and all activities related to the sponsored children project in Rwanda. The following day was a Lord’s Day. We had a great meeting of remembrance of our Lord’s work followed by a fellowship meal, Bible study, and learning of hymns for the whole afternoon. On Monday, we started with the girls’ camp. Our subject was the Three Marys, and we observed these three women as examples of women who knew the secret of knowing, following, and serving the Lord wholeheartedly. The exercise was to identify the benefit of knowing the Lord personally, how this knowledge changes our attitude towards life’s circumstances, and what serving and following Him closely mean in our everyday lives as young women today. Through these studies we were able to realize that there is abundant wisdom and riches God has provided in His Word that are available to every Christian—but that only those who diligently seek Him will possess them. The practical lesson learned was to be like Mary of Bethany and Mary Magdalene and remain at our Lord’s feet. As we repeatedly discussed the meaning and relevance of being at our Lord’s feet, we came to realize that many young people who had attended the camp did not have Bibles. Thankfully, the Lord provided means through which everyone who had attended the camp was able to receive one.

Boys’ Camp 26th to 28th of December 2019

Many of the young men (15 years old and up) came invited from different backgrounds. This camp was under the facilitation of brother David, Gerard, and Theogene. They dedicated the first day of the camp to the Gospel ministry by studying several passages where we see God revealing Himself to us. They also explored His eternal plan of salvation through the sacrifice of His beloved Son our Lord Jesus and explained the judgment that fell on Him, and the judgment that awaits the unbeliever.

The main theme of the camp was Running the Race. The exercise was to consider the race set before the believer and the preparations necessary in order to persevere and “win Christ” (Philippians 3:18). We also held a workshop on "Keeping Oneself Pure in an Impure World." The workshop involved discussions in small groups and presentations. After diligently studying their assigned passages, each

group's representative presented key thoughts that had been discussed in his group. During those presentations, leading brothers would help with clarification or correction when needed. We are very thankful for the help and support from local brothers, namely Gerard Mukama, Jacques Muragijimana, Habimana Emmanuel, and Jean Paul Mbala, amongst others who helped with Gospel lectures, answering questions, and monitoring group discussions during both the Girls' and Boys' Camps. We are thankful for the attentiveness of the participants considering the number of sessions held.

Some Testimonies

Many young women appreciated devotional and prayer meetings that were held in the mornings. Throughout the day, we had very interesting conversations with those who wanted to know more about how to live a life set apart for Lord Jesus. For example, one young girl came to the camp for the second time. Last year, when one of us (Jackie) had talked with her, she expressed relief and gratitude for knowledge of the Lord Jesus and about God's salvation. In a quick conversation this year, she confided to Jackie some challenges that hinder her progress. She lives with a foster family. This family doesn't allow her to go to the meeting or to any other Christian gathering. She said to Jackie, "I am so thankful that I could come again this year, and now I have my own Bible!" Based on her questions and comments during group discussions, we noticed increased interest and desire despite her challenges. This testimony is common to quite a few girls who came out to the camp this year.

This year, we got to witness how the Lord works in mysterious ways to win souls to Himself. Last year, after the camps, a WhatsApp group was created for young people from the meetings in Rwanda as a platform for sound doctrinal teaching, exhortations, encouragement, and keeping in touch with one another. This WhatsApp group is administered and monitored by two brothers in Kigali. Quite a few young people are benefiting spiritually from this platform in a very encouraging way. For instance, there is a young man who is related to a brother in Kigali and currently lives in Germany, where he is studying. This young man has been part of this WhatsApp group since the beginning. He has been actively asking questions that guided brothers to maintain good contact with him on a regular basis. This year, he came home for vacation. While in Kigali, he got to talk with David, and expressed his desire to be baptized before going back to Germany to resume his studies. They continued the conversation the next day with two other brothers—one of them had been in regular contact with this young brother, and he was baptized that afternoon. It was a blessing and an encouragement to witness how such a desire was spontaneously met. This testimony reminded us of the words of the Ethiopian eunuch to Philip in Acts 8:36, saying, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? ... and he went on his way rejoicing." To us, as young people, it is a great joy to see how the Lord is building the local testimony.

Other Activities – I. Sisters' Meeting in Nyamata

This year, we were able to identify more needs among girls and sisters in local assemblies. On Thursday the 26th of December, we went to Nyamata to fellowship with sisters there. We wanted to spend some time in studies and prayer as well as exchanging personal appreciations of our Lord's grace through our lives. We had also brought some teaching tools (a simulator developed by brother Hervé Theret et Daniel Bubenzer—see the picture below) to guide our conversations. The exercise of this sisters' meeting was to highlight how sisters can serve the Lord in homes, in the assembly, and in public places while simultaneously showcasing the dangers and limitations that sisters encounter in their Christian walk and how to overcome them. It was the first time that we had had an opportunity to bring younger and older sisters together in conversation. The single young women shared struggles of maintaining holiness and purity in an impure world, while the older women had an opportunity to share insights and encouragement. Our conversation brought much attention to the necessity of time for family prayer, mentorship counseling of older sisters to younger sisters, and well-established family Bible study routines at home.

The highlight of this meeting was the exchange of personal experiences, where we shared our personal convictions and habits when it comes to social life and living a life set apart for the Lord, and some family routines such as Bible studies at home, etc. As visiting sisters, we were asked to share how we study and pray together as a family at home: who takes the lead, and how we go about it. While sharing, we realized that we have different ways of reading the Bible at home, because the approach to Bible

reading of a family with young children is different from the way a family with older children studies the Bible. Nevertheless, we all have shared experiences as a family of nearness to our Lord. Sharing our stories was very encouraging and eye-opening to many—especially sisters who have young families.

II. Gospel Outreach in the Community on Umuganda Day

The 28th of December was the last Saturday of the month where in Rwanda everyone must participate in a national cleaning activity in the communities. For that reason, we couldn't hold camp activities. However, we used the time to distribute tracts among communities that had come to dig trenches on a hillside to limit water damage that had been occurring. The sisters were singing newly translated songs under the eucalyptus trees near where men were digging. People would stop to listen and ask questions about who we are and what we believe. It was a particularly beautiful moment that morning. Afterwards everyone gathered for a community meeting and we were asked to sing for the gathering. We thank the Lord Jesus for such an opportunity to proclaim His name, His death and resurrection through songs that we were able to sing. More so, we are thankful that we were able to distribute about 3500 tracts to people there and on our way back to the Bible center.



Participants at the Girls' Camp



The simulator teaching tool used

III. Fellowship Meals and Home Visits

Sisters invited us over for meals, lunch and dinner at different occasions. We spend memorable time in fellowship in prayer and singing. We also had the privilege to spend the New Year's evening with saints from Nyamata and Kigali. We had a great time in the Word and in thanksgiving prayer followed by a fellowship meal. The following day we had a blessed young people's meeting. This time we discussed the challenges that many young people face in high school and possible solutions. It was a time for practical lessons and encouragements. Many young people opened up and shared their biggest challenges with boarding school system in Rwanda that limit their spiritual growth. One young brother who just finished high school shared his personal experience on how he grew spiritually while living in boarding school and gave strong advice to those who are still in boarding school. Below is his story.

He is 19 years old, and he just finished high school. He was born and grew up in the meeting. When he went to boarding school, he joined different Christian groups and was actively involved. However, he knew that those Christian groups did not have sound doctrine but always found it difficult to be by himself throughout the semester. During his last year, he decided to stop joining those groups and started to rely on simply personal devotions using good seeds, hymnbook and the prayer. His encouragement to the young ones was that they don't need to find belonging among other Christian groups since they don't have sound doctrine. He rather encouraged them to take their hymn books with them to school, learn them by hearing and singing them all the time. While individual devotions and meditations help one to stay grounded in the truth, it is still important to be able to gather with other Christians. Therefore, he encouraged everyone to come to the meetings during school breaks.

IV. Gospel Meeting with Sponsored Children

This year, we had a children's Bible class on nativity. The exercise was explaining why the Lord Jesus had to come on earth, and how he came. We had prepared classes in such a way that the kids would be actively participating. After class, we had time to help in making a craft project for their sponsors. The

purpose was to express gratitude where each child would write their name and a little note on craft paper, then fold it in a traditionally crafted banana leaf picture frame with a photo of themselves.

We also had some time to visit a few families of sponsored children. We were able to get to meet their families and know their environment and circumstances in which they live in. One of the families we visited is Christian. We were able to talk a little about the scriptures, then we prayed together. Every year we meet different families that really helps us to understand the needs of the children. We are very thankful to the Lord for Sister Godelive and Winfred's care and effort that they put in to ensure that every child in the program is well assisted as the Lord provides. It is very impressive how close these sisters are to the families of the children.

V. Youth Meetings in Kamembe

For the last two days of the trip (3rd and 4th January), David traveled to Kamembe, in the Western Province of Rwanda near the border between R.D. Congo and Rwanda. Kamembe is around seven hours by bus from Kigali. During those days, he was able to hold youth meetings. They considered the disciplines of a disciple of Christ and what is our "great salvation". It was touching to see two brothers with a desire for the Lord who actively took part, even while suffering from malaria. One young brother from across the border in Bukavu, Congo came as well. We would like to commit to your prayers this small assembly where they are currently just two brothers.

Subject of prayer for the young people and the Lord's work in Rwanda

- For the young women and girls who manifested increased interest in the gospel, and those who would love to be part of Christian circles but can't because of their families' faith or other limitations,
- For the young people who got Bibles for the first time, that the Lord may reveal Himself to them through His Word.
- That many young Rwandan men and women may turn to the Lord, for a continued renewal of the desire for God's Word,
- That the Lord may raise up that young men who can be active in the Lord's service.
- Protection for the younger ones who are in boarding schools that they may be guarded from false doctrines that may sway their faith, while away from families,
- For continued spiritual growth,
- For blessings, wisdom and encouragement for Sister Godelive and Winfred who take care of the sponsored children,
- That the Lord may grant us another opportunity to serve Him in a like manner in 2020.

The local brethren took good care of all the logistic details for food, lodging, and transportation of the camps and activities. We are thankful for the Lord's mercies in these matters but more importantly the joy of the Lord and peace among the brethren. If the Lord in His grand designs and unceasing work employed us to plant a few seeds and water with a few drops during this trip, we pray that He also gives the increase and blesses the continuing labor of the local brethren.

We are also very thankful for the donations we received that enabled us to provide Bibles to the many who did not have bibles. We Praise the Lord, for we experienced His mercies and grace.

Rwanda MAG Team 2019: Abigail Vedder, David Moy de Vitry, Jackie Bagwiza, Stephanie Reeh



Singing in Kigali



Youth meeting in Kamembe