

Missions



ZAMBIA

A Village for the Elderly
Provides Hope

Online Prayer Meeting
for Teens

An Encouraging
Return to Asia

2018 Missionary
Orientation Program



Thinking It Through

BY KEN FLEMING

The Matter of the Heart

Jeremiah was the most prominent spokesman for God during the last 40 years of the tiny nation of Judah (626–586 BC). During those years the nations of the Middle East were in constant turmoil. The Assyrian Empire that had been dominant over the entire area for several hundred years was falling apart, and Babylon was emerging as the new leader. The people of Judah were falling away from the true God and strongly attracted to trust in the false gods of the Canaanites. They placed idols in the temple area and worshipped them with illicit sexual acts “on every high hill and under every green tree.”¹ The babies born were sacrificed on the pagan altars in the Valley of Hinnom, in Jerusalem. Four of Judah’s last five kings encouraged them in their wicked ways. Things were so bad that the book of God’s Law was lost in the temple.

When good King Josiah reigned, God’s book of the Law was found in the temple and it was read to the king. He tore his clothes because he realized how far they had fallen away from God. So, he called on the people to destroy their idols and shrines. It was during that time that God called Jeremiah to urge the people of Judah to consider what happened to their sister-kingdom of Israel when she would not abandon her pagan practices. The Assyrians captured Samaria and exiled 27,000 Israelites to Assyria. “Yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also.”² So, God then told Jeremiah to preach: “Judah has not turned to Me with her whole heart, but in pretense.”³

The problem was that though the people of Judah had torn down some pagan shrines and even celebrated the Passover, at the king’s demand, it was not because they wanted to, but because they were ordered to. It was only an outward display not a change of heart. When King Josiah died, he was succeeded by his son Jehoiakim. God told Jeremiah to write God’s Word for him on a scroll. As each section was read to the king, he cut

it off the scroll with his penknife and threw it into the fire until the whole scroll was burned.⁴ What a contrast between these two kings!

During that time, God told Jeremiah about something wonderful that He was going to do. It would be a game changer. He said: “I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. . . . I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts.”⁵

God was going to make a new covenant, and at the center of the new covenant would be a change in the heart. It would not be the addition of new rules but an inner transformation. Hearts have a fundamental flaw. Jeremiah spoke of it: “The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron; With the point of a diamond it is engraved on the tablet of their heart. . . . The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?”⁶

The sin that is engraved on our hearts affects our character and establishes our habits. When David was recovering from his sin with Bathsheba he asked God for forgiveness: “Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow” and then he prayed that God would deal with his heart, “Create in me a clean heart, O God.”⁷

David realized that the only way for him to live for God’s glory was with a heart cleansed by God. When we trust Jesus as our Savior the Spirit of holiness comes to live in us and give us hearts into which God puts His law.⁸ It is only with the Spirit’s power that you can “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. . . . And love your neighbor as yourself.”⁹

Search me, O God, and know my heart today;
Try me, O Savior, know my thoughts, I pray.
See if there be some wicked way in me;
Cleanse me from every sin and set me free.¹⁰ ■

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¹ Jeremiah 2:20; ² 3:8; ³ 3:10; ⁴ 36:23; ⁵ 31:31, 33; ⁶ 17:1, 9; ⁷ Psalm 51:7, 10; ⁸ Jeremiah 31:31–33; ⁹ Matthew 22:37, 39; ¹⁰ J. Edwin Orr, “Search Me, O God,” 1936.

GOD PROVIDES A WAY

CARING FOR ABANDONED ELDERLY IN ZAMBIA



BY TIM & JOY BEER

Throughout Scripture, we are reminded of God's concern for the poor, the helpless, and the widowed. We are told not to afflict them because the Lord administers justice to them and is their defender.¹ The Bible warns against those who prey on widows and also clearly instructs the church to look after those in need.²

In the developing parts of the world, the church of God is constantly faced with the needs of such people, and their sad plights move Christians. Many years ago, a previous missionary, Mr. Charles Geddis, started a village here at Loloma for elderly people who had no one to care for them. Through the years, the Lord has used this village for the elderly to protect many of these dear people and to provide for their basic needs.

Cultural background

In many parts of Africa, there is still an underlying impact and fear of witchcraft, especially in the rural areas. This reality may not be evident to a visitor as usually it only becomes apparent when staying in an area for a long time, once a person becomes more acquainted with the local language and culture.

Above: If relationships are repaired, some elderly, like Nyakutemba, can return to their families.

From the cultural perspective, some believe that only the spiritual help of a witch doctor, not medicine, can cure certain diseases. In addition, the historical belief is that an external influence, such as a curse or witchcraft, causes death, so if the correct precautions are taken, death can be prevented. It is also believed that an elderly person can transform into a witch or demon-like creature with the ability to “eat” someone, causing sickness and then death. All of this sounds very strange if you come from the west, but it is a reality to many born and brought up in the more rural parts of Africa.

When there is a sickness in a village, or especially a death, the cause is established upon the people’s cultural beliefs and understandings. According to their beliefs, someone is responsible, and so the people pay a diviner or witch doctor to come and identify the person who is the cause of the problem.

In his cunning, psychological manner, the diviner listens carefully to the comments of the people in the community, who look at everything through their “cultural glasses.” In many cases, the majority of people are already suspicious of one person, and so, when the diviner summons this person in public to confirm they are guilty, most people agree with him. Sadly, due to fear of the diviner and the community, this individual has few other options than to admit guilt. Harsh punishment follows, for which they may have to pay several cows, their house may be destroyed, or the person may be burned to death in their house.

Impact on the elderly

As may be imagined, the diviner will often convict an elderly person, accusing him or her of being a witch. Even without a diviner, amongst some families where a person becomes sick, the elderly grandparent (often the widowed grandmother) is accused as the cause of the sickness and labeled a witch. An elderly person who never had any children is often a prime target for such an accusation.

From the Western perspective, accusing a grandparent or great-grandparent of such a crime seems very barbaric, but in African culture, removing such a person from society is seen as a necessary procedure for protecting the other members of the village. Often, what baffles Westerners is the apparent lack of foresight: if this is how the younger generations treat the elderly in society, will not the same happen to them if they are privileged to reach that age?

A safe haven

Currently, our village for the elderly is home to 22 dear people, of whom some have been labeled as witches, and others have no family to care for them, or their relatives are unable to look after them. They all live in basic accommodations, made up of a number of housing blocks where each person has their own room, a place to cook, and a small area to cultivate crops if they are able. On a regular basis, they receive food, money, soap, diesel for a night light, and, at times, clothes and blankets.



One recent blessing was having a well drilled in the center of the village. Previously everyone had to walk some distance to get water for drinking or cooking, but now, thankfully, everyone can easily access the water supply.

Some touching stories

One of the challenges of running the village is discerning those who are really in need and should be looked after. For some, the decision is very clear cut, and so, we are happy to take them. In other cases, discernment is needed to find the truth as some people think that we are here to look after all the elderly people in the area! Thankfully, the elders in the Loloma assembly are often involved, and they are very helpful in such matters.

The following few touching stories show how the Lord provides a safe haven for some of the elderly in this area.

Kandeleyi

Many years ago, Kandeleyi suffered from leprosy, which affected her hands and feet. Due to the disease, Kandeleyi never

Above: With a new well, the elderly community can collect water easily now.



married or had children, but she lived with some relatives in a village area some distance from Loloma. However, one evening she heard the relatives planning against her, due to her disease, singleness, and increased years, and so, as best as she was able, she fled for her life. When she finally reached Loloma, she received a place to stay, and she has been with us for more than 20 years. Despite her hard lot in life, she is always friendly and happy and, at times, can be found singing to herself.



Suzanna

A couple who lived in this area took Suzanna in as she was childless and in her aging years. Unfortunately, when the husband passed away, the wife became suspicious of Suzanna, and so the aging woman had to leave. Suzanna tried finding relatives in a distant town but soon returned to this area with nowhere to live and no one to look after her. In her desperation, she tried to end her life by wading in the local river, hoping that a crocodile would kill her. Thankfully, it did not work, and a brother in a nearby assembly alerted us to her plight. All she needed was someone to care for her, and so she settled in well

at our village for the elderly. She was always quiet and thankful, and it was a joy to be used by the Lord to provide for her basic needs for approximately three years. She passed away suddenly earlier this year, but we trust she is now with the Lord.

Ziniya

Ziniya's assembly referred her to us about 10 years ago, when she was in her mid-60s, because her family had accused her of being a witch. Even though the saints where she fellowshiped were willing to build Ziniya a house and provide for her, they pleaded with us to take her as it was unsafe for her to remain in her home area. They said that, one night, the relatives would come to kill her; only by moving out of the area would she be safe. Ziniya is a bright and appreciative lady and still active compared to many she lives with, which enables her to be of help to others.

Nyakutemba

Nyakutemba stayed at the village for many years, which initially surprised us as she had relatives nearby. However, she was very helpful in caring for some ladies who could no longer cook for themselves, and she was a very sweet soul.

Several years ago, when returning from an afternoon church meeting, I found her weeping at the entrance of our house. Someone beat her on the head and arm, and she was shaken. Her sad story was that her family—children, grandchildren, and in-laws—called her to them and claimed she was the cause of the sickness a child in their village contracted. In a dream, Nyakutemba's great-grandchild saw her great-grandmother eating

From top: The elderly at the village regularly receive portions of food and living essentials; Despite a difficult life, Kandelevi is always cheerful.



Clockwise from top left: Village residents are thankful for God's provisions; Despite their age, the women work together to collect firewood; Besides rooms to live in, each resident also has a kitchen to cook in; From time to time, the residents receive blankets; The local women are overjoyed with the colorful new clothes.

her up, and just because of this young teenager's dream, the family severely warned Nyakutemba to stop her evil practices. Otherwise, her life would end abruptly. The family allowed her to leave, and she returned to our village. Sadly, the next day, a drunk grandson followed her and attacked her with a large stick. Leaving her wounded, he said he would be back to finish her off!

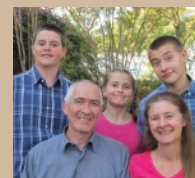
After a warning to the family, this young man was caught the next day and handed over to the police, which led to him serving a jail sentence and created all sorts of bad feelings between us and the relatives. However, we were able to use the incident to share the Gospel with them. Thankfully, the situation has changed for the better. As Nyakutemba can no longer cook for herself, her daughter came to the village last year to take Nyakutemba home with her, promising to care for her mother if we would still provide some food items. We happily agreed, thankful that a family member is willing to fulfill her responsibility to her mother.

Appreciative hearts

While these dear elderly people have so little of this world's goods, their thankfulness and contentment is always moving to see. If, at any time, we are tempted to feel overwhelmed with

the many challenges of life or to think that life has been unfair to us, visiting these dear people is always humbling, and it corrects our outlook on life. By comparison, we have so much to be thankful for.

Being involved in their lives as they draw close to eternity is a blessing. Because they come from different tribes—Luvale, Lunda, Chokwe, and Luchazi—we often have a little fun discussing parts of their language that I still may not follow. They love visits, which, to them, are a confirmation that they are loved and not forgotten. It is a joy to pass through the village every now and then and share the Gospel with them. Our greatest desire is that they will all leave this world knowing the Lord Jesus as their Savior. ■



Tim and Joy Beer, with their three children, serve the Lord in Zambia. Joy was commended in 1996 by Ardsley Bible Chapel in Ardsley, Pennsylvania. Tim was commended in 1997 by Crawley Gospel Hall in Crawley, United Kingdom.

¹ Exodus 22:22–24; Deuteronomy 10:17–18; Psalm 68:5

² Isaiah 10:2; Matthew 23:14; Acts 6:1–7, 20:35; 1 Timothy 5:3; James 1:27

ONLINE PRAYER MEETING



Bringing Young People Together through Technology

BY JOSHUA T. SWAIM

At the end of 2016, after coming back from the National Bible Bee in Texas, I missed the vibrant, Christ-centered prayer meetings I had enjoyed at the competition with other young people. Because we were all spread out across the United States, we had no practical way for us to meet again in person, but my brothers and I wanted to take advantage of modern technology to host prayer meetings over video call. After posting on the competition's social media page and gathering interest, we set a date and prepared to host our first online prayer meeting in December 2016. We chose to make the meeting an hour long and to host it on Google Hangouts, the free, online service.

On the day of the prayer meeting, about seven of us joined the call. It was a little awkward at first, but despite that, our first meeting was amazing. Even though none of us were together physically, the meeting was full of the same passion and focus on God that had characterized our prayer meetings in Texas. Soon, we began gathering together weekly for prayer. Although most of us had never met face-to-face, our bond in Christ grew stronger and stronger. Before long, we were meeting together twice a week.

In January, we decided to try hosting an all-day prayer meeting on a Saturday in February. Esther Bosworth, from Boulevard Bible Chapel in Florida, started emailing missionaries, asking for prayer requests. On the day of the prayer meeting, we had so many responses that we had to schedule another all-day prayer meeting to finish praying for all the missionaries. At those meetings, we met Micah Ferguson (*Missionary Prayer Handbook* Day 14), a missionary kid from Moldova, and we started hosting

meetings on Saturday mornings so that he could join us too.

Today, about 20 people, including Mercy and Victoria Vanden Eeden (*MPH* Day 30), missionary kids from Ecuador, regularly attend the prayer meetings. Most of us are teenagers or young adults, but a few parents also attend. We meet each week on Tuesday and Thursday evening and on Saturday morning. Sometimes, we fall into a rut and getting through each meeting seems tedious, but through everything, God is constantly working to mold us into the image of His perfect Son. Sarah Maloof, one of the young people who has attended the prayer meetings from the beginning, says, "These meetings are a dream come true. How wonderful to seek God together! I love rejoicing together over answered prayer that people be saved!"

Modern technology comes with many dangers, but it can also be used as a tool for God's glory. It is now possible to pray regularly with Christians who are scattered across the world. It is possible to study the Bible with a new believer in another state and to meet with missionaries halfway across the world for prayer. We have opportunities, which never existed before, to encourage and strengthen the church. We would love for others to join us and share in the riches of the blessings of fellowship with Christ. ■



Joshua Swaim, the son of Mark and Tami Swaim (MPH Day 30, Other Overseas Service), grew up as a missionary kid in Poland and the United States.

Using technology, the young people above and many more across the world build a community around prayer.