

A Call to Prayer

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“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. ‘As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.’” Isaiah 55:8-9

Since my last newsletter, virtually nothing has gone according to plan. I should be more specific. Since then, virtually nothing has gone according to MY plan.

The day after I sent out my last newsletter was lesson #1 in working on God’s timeline, not my own. It was the last day in the market before Christmas and my trip home for a wedding. I had a lot to do and was trying to get around to everyone to say good-bye. I hadn’t planned on spending time chatting with the Muslim teachers that day, in fact I had even thought about how I could possibly avoid them, since I was pressed for time.

One of them stopped me, while another one asked if demons can possess people. Madou, the man who stopped me explained that there was a teenage girl who was being troubled by a demon. It was making her run all over the place and undress (which is particularly taboo in our context). Only men were strong enough to subdue her and bring her home to her family.

Madou insisted that I come to see the sick girl, who lived just across the street. I have never dealt with such a thing before and had NO idea what I might find. We found Nene face-down on a cement floor in the house, exhausted. The family was very disturbed by the whole situation, and was at a loss for how to help their daughter.

I asked if they knew about Jesus and all the healings he performed when he was on earth. Madou was the only one who was familiar with them. I explained to the family and other on-lookers that Jesus healed

people of all kinds of things, including “demon sickness” and even brought dead people back to life. I said I was one of Jesus’ followers and asked if I could pray to God in Jesus’ name for Jesus to heal Nene. They were happy for the offer.

Believe it or not, there’s no “How to cast out a demon” training before we arrive on the mission field. This was a massive leap of faith for me, and my imagination about what might happen was running completely out of control.

By God’s grace, I was able to lay hands on Nene and pray not only for her deliverance from the demon that was troubling her, but also for God to show everyone watching that Jesus was the most powerful in this situation. During some of the prayer Nene appeared to be struggling, but after about 10 minutes or so of God doing what only God can do, she was sitting up, calm and in her right mind. Afterwards, Madou said, “Jesus is powerful!” Please pray that Nene’s family, Madou, and everyone who saw what Jesus did for Nene would spread the word about His power over demons and darkness.

The remainder of things that didn’t go according to my plan started Christmas Eve when my first of four flights was 11 hours late, which caused me to miss all my flights and my extended family’s Christmas Day celebration. Fortunately, God blessed me with friends along the way to run me back and forth to the airports in Mali and Senegal, and who offered me food and a place to rest when I was stranded. God also provided a merciful airline representative who waived the rescheduling fees and got me on the next flight, 24 hours later.

My friends' wedding and the mission festival at my home congregation went well, but my attempt to renew my Guinea visa while in the US did not. We were first told that the embassy had run out of visa stickers, thus the delay in returning my passport. After a lot of runaround and sending a courier to the embassy in DC, we learned that they had closed the embassy for several days. The courier's persistence eventually paid off and she was able to get into the embassy. That's when we learned that they had lost my passport. A few flight changes later, they managed to find it, but still didn't have any visa stickers and refused to turn over the passport to the courier, so they mailed it back to me and I had to mail it to a different Guinea Embassy. After all that runaround, I received a 3 month visa instead of the requested 1 year visa.

I was all set to return to Guinea and then the east coast was blasted with the second blizzard in less than a week and I had to delay my departure again, for the fourth time. The travel agent said everything should be cleared up by Monday Feb 15, so that was the new plan. The Friday before my flight I woke up with a bad case of pink eye. I went in to a "minute clinic", got some meds and expected things to clear up in plenty of time for my Monday AM flight. They did not, they got worse.

Turns out they prescribed the wrong meds, so the infection spread to my tonsils and worsened. After taking 3 powerful antibiotics for 2 wks, the bacterial infections were overpowered. However, I continued to have a low-grade fever. After many doctor appointments and a CT scan, it appears that I contracted a really stubborn virus when my immune system was already weakened by the other infections. Now I just have rest up and pray that my energy returns soon, though my Dr. said it will probably take another 10 days or so to recover.

Why am I giving you a play-by-play of all these little details? To illustrate why I am so reliant on your prayers! Who would've ever thought that all these little things could add up to nearly 2 months of being away from life and ministry in Guinea? Two months may not seem like much time, but every time I've left and returned to Guinea, friends and neighbors have passed on to their eternal home; most without even knowing they have a Savior.

The 3-week saga of visa and passport issues has an interesting parallel. LCMS World Mission staff and I were frustrated with how things were handled at the embassy. I know the actions of the embassy staff were due to issues in their home culture, but their fear kept them from doing their jobs.

The staff at the Embassy had all the information we needed to make informed decisions about how to proceed with getting the visa and when to reschedule my flights. But they wouldn't share that information with us. The embassy representatives were ashamed, and believed that the information they had would frustrate or anger us, so they chose not to share the information we needed.

For those of us who know Jesus, and know we'll spend eternity with Him, we have all the important information. We may have even forgotten what a precious thing it is to have the joy of salvation because we've had it for so long. Guess what? Not everybody has it.

Some are seeking it desperately, not knowing what it might look like, but hoping they'll know it when they see it. Others desire it, but aren't sure it's available to them. There are so many individuals, on every continent, created in the image of the Almighty God that have no idea what they're missing, either now or in eternity. That's why God has us here in this time. He put us here to love them, show them and explain to them all that the Lord has for them. Do you know at least one person who would be blessed by some hope?

As we are in the season of Lent, focusing on the suffering and death of our Lord, may we remember why He went through it all. It was for us. ALL of us. Some of us just don't know it yet. Wouldn't you like to be the person who gets to share the great news with someone that God loves them and deeply desires to spend eternity with them?

"But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect." 1 Peter 3:15

Prayers

Please join me in praising God for:

- my many individual and congregational supporters--Thank you!!!
- His deliverance of Nene
- a peaceful initial transition to civilian power in Guinea
- the improved health of former President Camara
- the opportunity to be part of Molly & Cory's wedding
- opportunities to share what God is doing in Guinea at my home congregation during their annual mission festival
- the opportunity to attend farewell services for one of my pastors who is retiring/moving
- extra time with family during the visa/passport travel delays
- keeping me in the US so I could receive good health care for my recent illnesses
- the many spiritual lessons He's been teaching me while I've been stuck in the US

Please join me in asking God for:

- peace and stability in Guinea during the continuing changeover from military to civilian rule
- peace and stability for all of West Africa, as many countries are currently in major transitions
- a smooth and speedy transition back to life in WA, especially as hot season is already underway
- a relationship to grow between Nene's family and I, that they would be interested in learning more about Jesus, who healed their daughter
- reliable city water service to be restored to my home in Guinea
- internet service to be restored to Guinea (while the governmental transitions continue)
- safe and uneventful travels for the Kansas team who are currently traveling the country (with Heineys)
- safe and uneventful travels for LCMS and LBT missionaries traveling to and in Ghana at the end of March
- His provision to get me healthy, back up to full strength, and back to Guinea in time to be with the KS team before they leave

To support my work financially, you may send a tax-deductible gift to: LCMS World Mission
1333 S. Kirkwood Rd.
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