

Victory

magazine

Hidden With Christ Ministries
November/December 2021



Stormy Weather

Page 3

IN THIS ISSUE

- 2 On Moving Mountains**
- 3 Stormy Weather**
- 4 Food for Thought**
- 5 Joy Out of Sorrow**
- 6 You Are Invited**
- 7 A Cow Blessing**
- 8 Baraka's New Family**
- 9 A Future and a Hope**
- 11 A Dream Within Reach**
- 13 Faith Corner**

VICTORY MAGAZINE is a publication of Hidden With Christ Ministries. All rights reserved.
Copyright ©2021

OUR VISION:

To demonstrate the love of God through mercy ministries and by freely teaching God's Word around the world.

OUR MISSION:

To care for orphans and abandoned children and other needy persons through practical outreaches and by producing free Bible materials and training.

Every Gift you send and every prayer you offer helps change lives around the world!

Donate securely online at:
www.hiddenwithchrist.org
www.treasuresofafrica.org
www.myeverydaybible.com

Hidden with Christ Ministries is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization in the USA registered with the IRS and donations made to HWCM are tax deductible under the law.



Hidden With Christ Ministries and Treasures of Africa Children's Home are GuideStar Exchange Gold Participants

Hidden With Christ Ministries
P.O. Box 3267
Tustin, CA 92781
USA

Hidden With Christ Ministries
P.O. Box 383
Moshi
TANZANIA

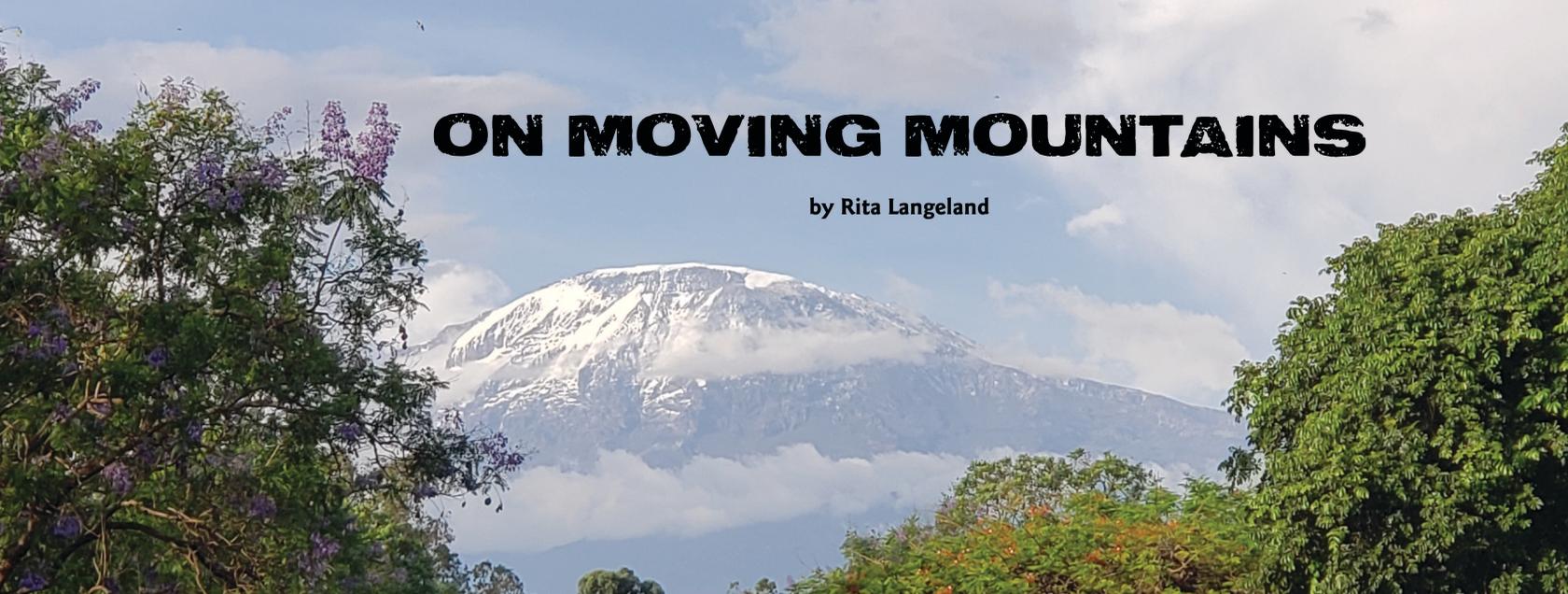
We would love to hear from you!

Please email us at:
info@hiddenwithchrist.org

Or call our U.S. Office Phone:
(714) 665-0407

ON MOVING MOUNTAINS

by Rita Langeland



Jesus replied, “Let the faith of God be in you! Listen to the truth I speak to you: Whoever says to this mountain with great faith and does not doubt, ‘Mountain, be lifted up and thrown into the midst of the sea,’ and believes that what he says will happen, it will be done. This is the reason I urge you to boldly believe for whatever you ask for in prayer—be convinced that you have received it and it will be yours.

Mark 11:22-24 The Passion Translation

I was sitting at my desk in our Moshi, Tanzania office when the sight of majestic Mt. Kilimanjaro came into view. A few days before, I had mourned the cutting down of two massive jacaranda trees which had graciously shaded our building. But it was the loss of those familiar friends that revealed the unexpected sight of the mountain from my office window. The past few days had been overcast, obscuring a magnificent view of the mountain that the removal of the trees and the parting of the clouds now unveiled. While observing the scene, the thought struck me that sometimes loss uncovers beauty that was always present, yet previously unnoticed.

Mountains are beautiful to gaze upon but can be formidable opponents to those trying to progress to the other side. For Hidden with Christ Ministries, this year has been one filled with mountains that needed moving to make forward progress. If I am truly honest, I must admit that it has been one of the most challenging years of my life. Separation from my husband and family for the longest stretches ever while I labored in Tanzania to help move the ministry in a new direction, has been personally painful. But as I write this, I can see the victory coming before the year’s end.

All of these challenges have caused me to review the prophetic word the Lord gave me in January for 2021. As you read this article – there will be less than 2 months remaining before the close of the year. **BUT it will not be too late to receive the promises of the YEAR OF TRIUMPH!** Here are some keys to seeing your mountains moved before year end:

FAITH: *If everywhere you look it appears things are falling apart – CHOOSE TO BELIEVE GOD ANYWAY!*

HOPE: *If everyone around you feels hopeless about the future – GET YOUR HOPES UP ANYWAY!*

LOVE: *If people have mistreated you in 2021 – CHOOSE TO LOVE THEM ANYWAY!*

These scriptural principles will set you up to receive the miraculous intervention of God. Then add to that the powerful lesson Jesus taught in the Gospel of Mark about speaking to the mountains you are facing.

For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. (Mark 11:23 NKJV)

If you will press into these Biblical admonitions, I believe you will be able to testify of victories won and mountains moved out of the way at the end of 2021.



by
Marcia Chang Vogl

When a rainstorm with flood warnings is predicted, go to higher ground. If a tornado is headed your way, shelter below ground. If a hurricane is coming, get out of the way. It's important to know what kind of storm you're facing so you choose the right course of action needed to survive it.

Everyone faces storms in life. Not all storms are the same. Here are three types of storms you need to discern.

1. (Jonah 1:17 - 2:10) Jonah was in a storm because he was running away from God. If God has something to tell you and you refuse to listen, you will be in a storm. Perhaps there is something in your life He wants you to face and deal with. An emotional, relational, or physical storm will kick up. When that happens, spend some time meditating on His Word and listening to Him. This storm needs "quiet time". That's what Jonah did in the whale. God gave him isolated quiet time. When he finally submitted to God, he was delivered from the belly of the whale in order to carry out his divine assignment.
2. (Acts 27:10-12) Paul was in a storm, not because he was running from God, but because he was pursuing God. The captain of the ship made a bad decision risking the storm even though Paul warned him against continuing on. Marooned on the island of Malta, Paul was delayed in his trip to Rome. Paul remained faithful to the Lord and all those with him were spared. He waited two months for the weather to clear and board another ship. He used that time to share the Gospel on Malta and not sit around moping, feeling sorry for himself. You may be caught in a storm caused by someone's bad decision that swept you in. Be a Paul and make the best use of the time.
3. (Acts 16:16-18) Demonic storms will try to derail you in your witness for Christ. Paul was followed by a demon-possessed servant girl. Though her words sounded good, announcing that Paul and his companions were servants of the Most High God, she was a distraction. Paul took authority over the demon and commanded it to leave her so it could no longer operate through her. When demonic storms come against you, you must take authority over the situation and command the activity to stop.

Just as you need to discern the natural storms to know what action to take, you need to discern the spiritual storms. Not all storms are demonic. Not all storms are caused by someone else. When you are in a storm, take a moment to seek the Lord. What kind of storm is this? Is this a "Jonah storm" for which you need quiet time? Is this a "Paul storm" which requires you to minister while you wait? Is this a "distraction storm" that necessitates you take authority? When you have the answer, you will know what to do.

Food for Thought

Has someone seen Christ in you today?
Christian, look to your heart, I pray.
The little things you have done or said
Did they accord with the way you prayed?
Have your thoughts been pure
and your words been kind?
Have you sought to have the Savior's mind?
The world with a criticizing view has watched
But did it see Christ in you?

Will someone see Christ in you today?
Christian, look to your life I pray.
There are aching hearts and blighted souls
Being lost in sin's destructive shoals,
And perhaps of Christ their only view
May be what of Him they see in you.
Will they see enough to bring hope and cheer?
Look to your light — does it shine out clear?

Author Unknown

Contributed by Joan Allen – Federal Way, Washington

Joy Out of Sorrow

Hamidu was 3 ½ years old when he first came to live at Treasures of Africa Children's Home. His story was different from the majority of children who had come to TOA. When the government Welfare officials got involved in Hamidu's case, he was in the hospital for treatment of burns caused by boiling hot water. This was not the first time this had happened. Hamidu had extensive scars from previous burns which covered the majority of one side of his body from the neck down to his leg, including his stomach. The hospital alerted the Social Welfare office because they had treated him previously for similar burns and suspected abuse in the home.



Hamidu's 8th Birthday

For his own safety, Hamidu was removed from his home and placed at Treasures of Africa Children's Home. Over time, the physical scars healed, and we prayed for healing of the invisible scars to his heart. When it came time to place the Treasures of Africa children in Foster families, we wanted to find a warm and safe environment for Hamidu.

One special man on the TOA staff, a grandfatherly gentleman with a great sense of humor came to mind. He was part of the security guard team at Treasures of Africa and was a favorite with the children because of his unquenchable smile and ability to make the children laugh. After a few visits to his home, Hamidu seemed very comfortable, and the foster family appeared to be a good fit. Mr. Kway and his very sweet wife welcomed Hamidu with open arms.

As he left Treasures of Africa, Hamidu seemed quite happy but wanted to remind us of one important thing. His 8th birthday was coming up in a few months, and he didn't want us to forget it. He remembered that at Treasures of Africa, birthdays were always celebrated with a delicious cake in honor of the birthday boy or girl. So, we made sure when his birthday rolled around, to personally deliver a chocolate cake to Hamidu at his new home. He was so excited!

Hamidu has come a long way from the sorrowful circumstances that first brought him into our care. We thank God that five years later, he truly is experiencing joy in his young life.

Editor's Note: Our new *TREASURES OF AFRICA KIDZ* project monitors the former TOA orphanage residents in their foster homes and fully sponsors their educational and medical expenses. If you would like to help us continue to care for these special children, please go to our website to donate.

www.treasuresofafrica.org



Hamidu with his foster parents

You Are Invited

TO

THE FIRST ANNUAL
TREASURES OF AFRICA KIDZ
REUNION BANQUET

**Saturday December 11, 2021
Moshi, Tanzania**

If you have ever dreamed of visiting Tanzania, this is a great opportunity. Indulge yourself in a 4 or 5 day wildlife safari and then end your week at our Treasures of Africa Banquet and meet the children you have so faithfully supported.

Call our office at 714 665-0407 for more information
or email

mary@hiddenwithchrist.org

Karibu Tanzania!

A COW BLESSING



Nestled on the southwest slope of majestic Mt. Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, Machame village is a gateway for mountain climbers entering the Kilimanjaro National Park. With lush green rainforest conditions, Machame is well known for its abundance of banana and other fruit trees. But locals know Machame as a place where contented cows produce some of the best milk in the Region. Milk buyers gladly make the trek up to Machame village to purchase milk for resale in surrounding towns and cities.

Machame is also the hometown of one of our former staff members, John, who served Treasures of Africa Children's Home as a security guard for more than a decade. His dream has been to start raising dairy cows for milk production on his family land on the slopes of Mt. Kilimanjaro.

Hidden with Christ Ministries has been endeavoring to assist our former orphanage staff by sowing seed into their micro-business efforts. Knowing that the gift of one pregnant dairy cow would be the start of a small business for John and his family, we were thrilled when a longtime HWCM supporter stepped up to specifically designate his donation to buy a cow!



Our faithful Project Coordinator, Sunday Joseph, worked hard searching to find the best cow possible. When the day came to purchase the cow and deliver it to its new owner, we put the trusty HWCM Toyota pickup truck to good use as a cow delivery vehicle!

We slowly wound our way up the mountain with the cow in the back of the truck, to the area where John and his brother have a piece of land which has been passed down through the generations of their family. John's brother already has a modest house there and John is in the process of building a simple block home with the money he received when his job at Treasures of Africa ended. The men had already prepared a place for the cow and John and his wife Martha were beaming from ear to ear when their cow was delivered. John, a usually quiet and reserved man, could not stop smiling. They were thrilled to receive their "cow blessing!" We know this gift will help provide a livelihood for our former staff member and his family.

You can help bless our former orphanage staff in a similar way by making a donation to our "Micro-business Support Projects." Go to our website www.hiddenwithchrist.org DONATE page. You will find a dropdown menu where you can specify this project for your donation. Or mail a check to: HWCM P.O. Box 3267 Tustin, CA 92781. THANK YOU!



Growing up in a drug house in the gritty side streets of Moshi town, Tanzania, is not a safe environment for a small child. Baraka was less than 2½ years old when a neighbor saw him wandering around totally unsupervised and barely fed. The Social Welfare authorities got involved and discovered that the mother of the child had abandoned him and the father was strung out on drugs. They removed him from the house which was inhabited by a number of drug addicts in addition to his father. Baraka was then placed at Treasures of Africa Children's Home.

When Baraka came to Treasures, he was a wild child. He had absolutely no training and no idea how to behave or obey an adult. He had been left on his own and undoubtedly had to forage for food. It took time but the TOA staff and missionaries worked with him until he learned some basics of good behavior. He devoured the loving attention and over time his behavior settled down.

When the time arrived for our Treasures of Africa children to be placed in Foster Families, one of our longtime staff members, who had served as a security guard for more than a decade, offered to take in Baraka. They amazingly shared the same surname, though they are not related. (The surname is a very common name in the Chagga tribe, much like Smith or Jones in the U.S.) John and his wife Martha have two daughters, and always wanted a son as well.



Baraka with his foster father John and his foster sisters Gladness and Glory

Baraka visited a few times over the Christmas holidays and the family was comfortable together. Baraka moved to their home in the town of Bomang'ombe and began attending a local English Medium Primary school along with John and Martha's daughter, Gladness.

As soon as their new home up on the mountain is completed, (see story on page 7) Baraka will have the blessing of living high above the town which once held such sad memories for him. His new home and family will be tucked away in the midst of the rainforest, filled with lush green banana trees, and one healthy, happy cow.

Editor's Note: Our new TREASURES OF AFRICA KIDZ project monitors the former TOA orphanage residents in their foster homes and fully sponsors their educational and medical expenses. If you would like to help us continue to care for these special children, please go to our website to donate. www.treasuresofafrica.org

A FUTURE AND A HOPE

***"For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord.
"They are plans for good and not for disaster,
to give you a future and a hope."***

Jeremiah 29:11 NLT

Going to college was not on his radar. Though he had been accepted to a college in the faraway city of Mwanza, Tanzania, 17-year-old Nemes had no hope of attending. He knew his parents were struggling so much they could not afford the bus fare to get him there, let alone the school fees or living expenses required for him to begin life as a University student. He planned to find work and contribute his earnings to help his family eat more than one meal per day as they had been doing in recent months.

But Nemes' mother wanted more for her son than that. She was determined to find a way for him to undertake the opportunity to study. She went to the village's local government office and begged for help to get her son into college. The village leader was sympathetic but had no resources to offer her. He suggested she go to the Social Welfare Office in Moshi and ask if they knew any way to help her son. He wrote a letter on her behalf corroborating the poverty-stricken state of the family and verifying the genuineness of their need. The letter attested that they were among the poorest families in the village and that both parents

did seasonal farm labor at a local coffee plantation when it was available.

Waiting for hours at the Social Welfare Office as a long line of people took turns pouring out their sorrowful stories to a social worker, was not easy for Nemes' mother. But she wouldn't allow pride or frustration to keep her from fighting for a chance for her son. She humbled herself and begged the Social Worker to help find a way for her first-born son to attend college.

Life had not always been this hard for the family. But when Nemes' father was diagnosed with a terminal illness and became unable to work, things got very tough.



Nemes' family home, a 2 room house for 5 people without any indoor plumbing or glass in the windows.

He could no longer provide for the family and Nemes' mother did whatever she could to earn a little money to feed the family.

The Social Worker she spoke with was familiar with Hidden with Christ Ministries' Rehema (Mercy) Projects. She knew we would consider the merits of each case they referred and prayerfully decide if it was one we could sponsor. So, she referred Nemes' mother to the HWCM office in Moshi. We arranged for a visit and interview at their home.

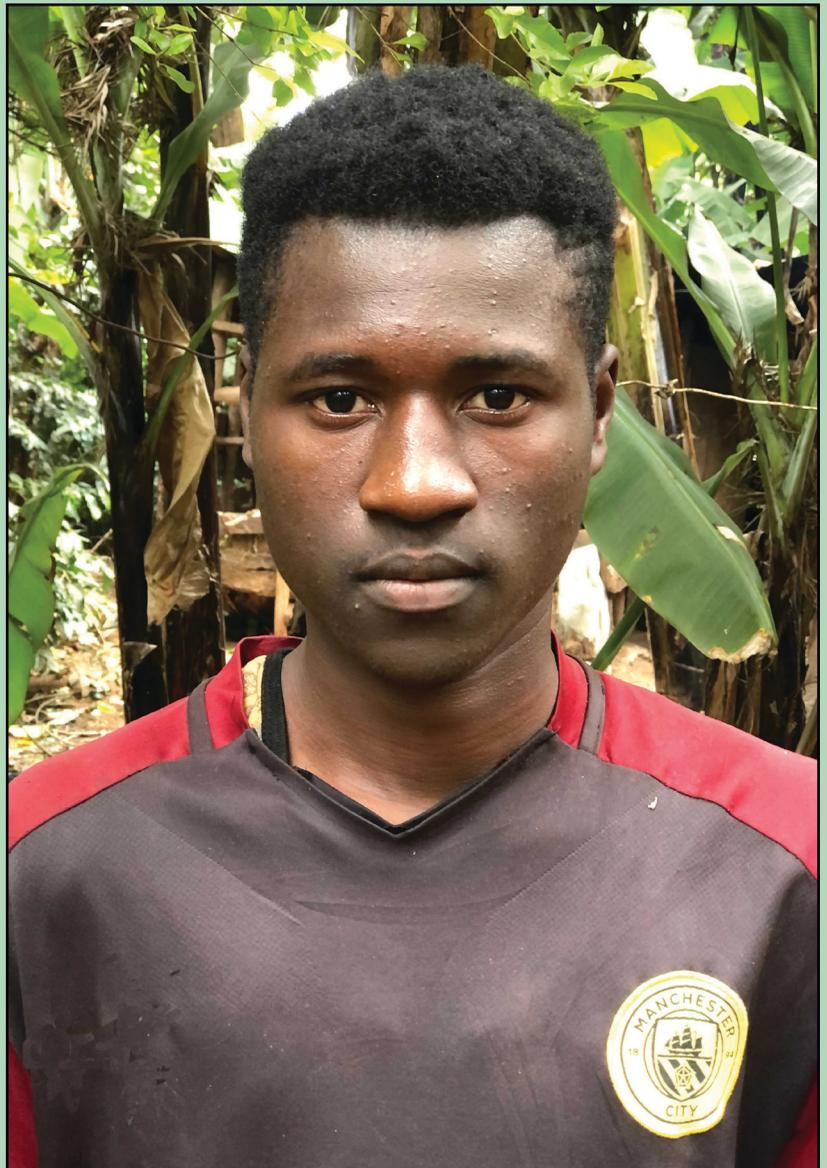
After traveling to the village, interviewing the family and observing the harsh reality of their living situation, HWC Administrator, Faith Kaluse, recommended that if financially possible, Nemes be sponsored for his college program by HWCM.

The time to leave for the start of the college term was in a few short days, so we assigned Raymond, one of our TOA graduates who had just completed a Diploma in Mechanical Engineering, to take him shopping and assist him with gathering the items he would need to live in a dorm. Because they were about the same height and size, Ray personally gave him a stock of his own clothing and shoes. He also gave him advice about how to avoid the temptations he will face at college and remain focused on his studies. The young man took it all in and told Ray, "I never thought I would be going to college, but with this chance, I just want to graduate so I can get a job and help my mother."

Now that he has been given the gift of hope for the future, we believe that with his determination and drive to help his family, Nemes will make it. Please pray for him as he embarks on this unexpected and miraculous opportunity.

Hidden with Christ Ministries contributes to the local community in the Kilimanjaro Region of Tanzania through its REHEMA (Mercy) PROJECTS. The local Social Welfare office often refers cases they feel merit consideration for this program. Please consider making a donation to our REHEMA PROJECTS fund to help us help others in need. You can contribute by mail or on our website's DONATE page where you will find a dropdown menu to specify your donation.

www.hiddenwithchrist.org/donate



Nemes

A Dream Within Reach

In the early days of Treasures of Africa Children's Home in Moshi, Tanzania, our continual message to the children was, "You can become anything you desire in the future...doctor, lawyer, or even President. Work hard in school and trust God... because with God, nothing is impossible." For some children this was no doubt a stretch to believe, but for others, like six-year-old Raymond, it was taken to heart. He dreamed of becoming a Mechanical Engineer working on Aircraft. He spent his time drawing pictures of planes and dreaming of the day he would be fixing those engines himself.

Today, Raymond is 21 years old and just completed a three-year Diploma program in Mechanical Engineering from Arusha Technical College. He can see his dream on the horizon. To become an Aviation Engineer, he needs a specific training program not available in his home country of Tanzania.

When we explored options for Raymond, we did not feel comfortable sending him to a foreign country to study where he had no "in country" support available. So, we turned our sights to the United States, where Hidden with Christ Ministries could readily offer assistance and encouragement when needed. He applied to Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia, which offers a two-year Degree in Aviation Mechanics in a Christian college atmosphere.

The application process was a bit grueling as international students must submit all of their transcripts to an independent evaluation company that assesses the strength of the coursework that a foreign student has undertaken. In addition, Ray had to undergo online real time exams in English, Mathematics and Computer skills. After jumping all of those hoops and submitting his work, Raymond received the news that he had been accepted to Liberty University to study Aviation Mechanics! He was thrilled!



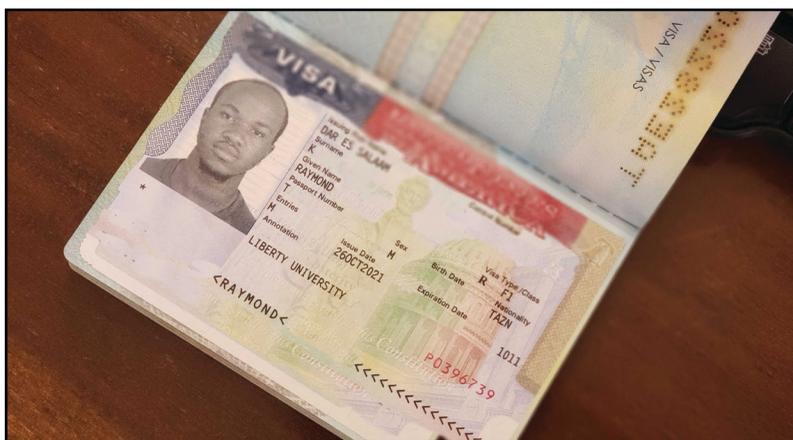
The next mountain to conquer involved applying to the United States Embassy in Tanzania for an F-1 Student Visa. Again, a plethora of paperwork had to be gathered, scanned and uploaded to the Embassy website. Once approved, fees had to be paid and an interview at the Embassy with a Consular Affairs Officer was scheduled. The U.S. Embassy is located in the city of Dar Es Salaam, and Raymond took his very first plane ride to get there.

His eyes scanned every inch of the 70-seater ATR 72-500, a French aircraft operated by the Tanzanian company Precision Air. He watched the propeller spin outside his window seat as the engines roared to life and listened to the hum of the motor as the plane began to lift off the runway. Everything about the experience was a joy to him.

Dar Es Salaam is a very crowded city whose population growth has outpaced its infrastructure, especially the roadways. Traffic jams of hours in duration are legendary. The Christian taxi driver said she would pray and ask God what time to pick Raymond up to make it to the Embassy by 9:15am. A miscalculation in travel time could result in forfeiting that precious interview slot. She arrived very early in the morning at the hotel and though the traffic was heavy, Raymond arrived for his Embassy appointment 45 minutes early. Even though applicants were cautioned not to arrive more than 15 minutes early, they allowed Ray to enter. This timing would determine which officer would interview him and we had prayed for the right person who would show him favor.

Entering the Embassy in Dar Es Salaam, Ray had to leave his cell phone behind and take only his visa paperwork and passport. Security measures in place ban all cell phones from the Embassy. Since the 1998 twin U.S. Embassy bombings in East Africa, where truck bombs were detonated simultaneously in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, security measures have been very tight.

Raymond's interview was held behind thick security glassed booths with everyone wearing masks. He overheard others being turned down around him and had to hold on to hope that God would give him favor in the eyes of the Consular Officer.



When it was all said and done, Raymond received that coveted Student Visa - stamped in red, white and blue in his passport. God has brought Ray's childhood dream within reach.

Editor's note: Raymond will fly to the U.S. in mid-December and his classes begin on January 4, 2022. Please consider making a year-end gift to our EDUCATION FUND to assist Ray and our other college students from Tanzania to receive an education that will prepare them for leadership in their nation.

www.treasuresofafrica.org/donate or www.hiddenwithchrist.org/donate



The Great Story Changer

by Rita Langeland

Let us look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith...

Hebrews 12:2 Modern English Version

The final chapter of the story of your life has yet to be written. Perhaps you are not happy with the earlier chapters or the direction your story is heading. If so, you need a plot change, which literary experts define as “a radical shift in the direction or expected outcome of a story.”

I like to imagine God taking out His pen and beginning to write our life stories at the moment of our conception. As we grow and become old enough to make independent decisions, most of us take the pen from God’s hand (knowingly or unknowingly) and start to write our own story line. God does not resist, because it is He who gave humankind the gift of a free will. Every person can choose to follow God and His plan for their life or decide to live independent of God.

The truth of the matter is that when we choose to live life without God’s input, trouble is sure to follow, and there is a Biblical promise that things will not end well. Twice in the book of Proverbs we are warned:

There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death. (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25)

Most people on this planet live by the principle of doing whatever “seems right” to them. The biblical Book of Judges records a period in the history of Israel spanning over 400 years filled with violence, anarchy, gross immorality and abandonment of God. The last nine words written in Judges sum up the root cause of that era of degradation by stating, “...everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” (Judges 21:25)

But what “seems right” to a man, is often not in line with what is right in God’s eyes. And to be among those whose stories are changed by God, we need to come into alignment with Him. Let’s look at a few people whose stories were changed by the great STORY CHANGER.

The thief on the cross was slowly bleeding to death as he hung next to Jesus that infamous Friday morning. He heard the other crucifixion victim hurling abuse at Jesus, challenging him to come off the cross and save them all if He was the Christ. The first thief rebuked him, saying, “***...we are receiving what we deserve for our crimes; but this man has done nothing wrong.***” Jesus saw his humility and repentant heart and changed the end of his story on the spot. “***Today you will be with me in paradise...***” Jesus promised him. Transformed from a criminal suffering under a death sentence to a forgiven sinner on his way to heaven, God had written a radical plot change into his life story at the last moment.

The convicted pickaxe murderer was calm on the day of her execution. She had said repeatedly that she did not fear death because she knew where she was going. Like the thief on the cross, Karla Faye Tucker¹ freely admitted her guilt and had genuinely repented of the brutal murders she and a friend committed while high on drugs. During the 14 years she spent on death row in a Texas prison, she shared the love and forgiveness she had come to know after surrendering her life to Christ, with her fellow inmates. God had changed the story of the abused child turned druggie turned murderer - into a tale of transformation and redemption. She walked to the room where she would receive a lethal injection to end her life with a smile on her face and a prayer on her lips. The great STORY CHANGER had done it again.

The barren woman wept bitterly. She was grieved over her inability to bear children. Adding to her misery, she was mocked daily by her husband’s second wife who had given him sons and daughters. Though her husband loved her dearly, Hannah was distraught and went to the temple to pray and ask God to give her a son. As she prayed fervently with many tears, Eli, the temple priest, mistakenly thought she was drunk and rebuked her for it.

1 ***Karla Faye Tucker – Set Free*** by Linda Strom.

Then Eli said to her, “How long will you behave like a drunk? Get rid of your wine!” But Hannah answered and said, “No, my lord, I am a woman despairing in spirit; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have poured out my soul before the Lord.” (1 Samuel 1:14-15)

Hannah could have been deeply offended at the priest for his false accusation but her humble and gracious response to him shows us she did not choose that road. As a result, God was able to answer her prayer for a “plot change” in her life.

So it came to pass in the process of time that Hannah conceived and bore a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, “Because I have asked for him from the Lord.” (1 Samuel 1:20)

The jailed freedom fighter had more than 27 years to seethe in bitterness. He and his fellow South Africans had endured tremendous injustice under the cruelty of apartheid. His years in a stark prison cell with no plumbing or bed, and long days spent in back breaking labor were enough to push a man into a cesspool of hatred and resentment. Yet Nelson Mandela knew that was a trap he could not afford to fall into. International pressure on the South African government to free Mandela, finally resulted in a date being set for his release. He knew he had to make a vital decision before he left those prison grounds. ***“As I walked out the door toward the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew if I didn’t leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I’d still be in prison².”***

God wanted to change Nelson Mandela’s story and use him as a great leader who could bring unity to a deeply divided nation. But letting go of the resentment in his heart toward those who had wronged him, was a key for his story to be changed. Like Hannah, Nelson Mandela had grounds to be offended yet chose not to indulge in that emotion. For those of us who need a story change in our lives, it is vital to examine our hearts and repent of any resentment, bitterness or unforgiveness we are holding. Then take the final step of forgiving the offenders. If we don’t, our life story will remain imprisoned.

The religious zealot was sure he was pleasing God as he hunted down Christians for opposing the religious “truth” he vigorously defended. Confident God was on his side, Saul of Tarsus sought to crush the growing sect of “heretics” who followed Jesus of Nazareth claiming he had risen from the dead. But God had a plot twist in mind that Saul never saw coming. It was an encounter with the living Truth on the road to Damascus that would mark his life forever.

As he journeyed, he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” Then the Lord said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.” So he, trembling and astonished, said, “Lord, what do You want me to do?” Then the Lord said to him, “Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.” (Acts 9:3-6)

Temporarily blinded, Saul’s religious know-it-all attitude vanished as he sat for three days in complete darkness. But God had seen his thirst for the truth and honored it with a story change that Saul could never have imagined. Saul, who became the apostle Paul, penned nearly half of the New Testament, was the first missionary to carry the Gospel to far flung places and died a martyr for his Lord. Transformed from a religious terrorist to a father in the faith, the Story Changer wrote a masterpiece in Paul’s life.

The arrogant intellectual smirked anytime the subject of religion was broached. Proud of his Yale Law School education and his staunch atheism, Lee Strobel was an award-winning Legal Editor of the Chicago Tribune. But his life was a mess. Immoral, narcissistic and prone to drunken rages, his young daughter feared his arrival home from work, not knowing what kind of mood or level of intoxication she would face. When his wife was befriended by a Christian woman and invited to church, her conversion to Christianity angered Lee. But he decided to investigate the claims of Christianity to prove it false. He was sure his wife would drop it once and for all after he presented his evidence. He undertook what he thought would be a weekend research project for a seasoned investigative journalist.

His research took more than two years until he concluded, “...it would take more faith for me to remain an atheist than to become a Christian.³” Like the apostle Paul, Lee had a heart to know the truth. With that spiritual seed, God was able to change Lee’s life story and he has become one of the leading defenders of the Christian faith in North America.

God is willing and able to change your story. But like every person mentioned above, humility and a willingness to surrender your own ideas about how your story should be written is required. It is time to put your life in the hands of the great STORY CHANGER.

2 ***Long Walk to Freedom*** by Nelson Mandela

3 ***The Case for Christ*** – by Lee Strobel



Be merciful to me, O
God, be merciful to me,
for in you my soul
takes refuge; in the
shadow of your wings
I will take refuge, until
the destroying storms
pass by.

Psalm 57:1