

THE 'LUKE 10 TRIP' THAT NEVER ENDED

Saviour T. H. Daitey and Alvin K. Baidoo

“These were his instructions to them: The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields. Now go, and remember that I am sending you out as lambs among wolves.”

Luke 10:2-3

We searched, we prayed and got ready to move. On February 12, 2020, we set off by bus for the Gambia. Basically, to scout the Mandinka people group of the Gambia and the Fula Jalons of Sierra Leone respectively— we have been praying for them for a while and had hope that the scouting would lead to future mission work amongst these people groups. It took as a dramatic trip through Burkina Faso, spent two nights on the streets of Mali and spent several hours crisscrossing Senegal before finally seeing the clear skies of the Smiling Coast of Africa, the Gambia, in the early hours of February 18, 2020.

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We had planned to spend two weeks finding people of peace for immediate Discovery Bible Studies (DBS), talking to missionaries and church leaders for possible partnerships and Disciple Making Movement (DMM) trainings and proceed to Sierra Leone for the same task. Then head back to Yagaba, Northern Ghana, our official service field by the first week of April. Little did we know that God was grandly weaving it all for His glory.

Now hosted by the Great Commission Movement of the Gambia, (GCMG), we started our evangelism activities with their campus team. We actively and intentionally reached out to university and college students on daily basis and focused also on finding persons of peace amongst them. At least there was no language barrier in this student environment.

It was fun to do that every day. Yeah fun— from encounters with cynical muslim polemics against Christianity, to skeptical muslims seeking secretly, to those starting DBS groups until someone betrays them to stop and to those who would continue to discuss with us openly or secretly and continue (till date) to receive Christian materials (evangelistic videos) from us. At least what it looks like for us to be disciple makers in the Gambia would begin with the campuses —we already got a fair idea of the Gambian field and we were ready to roll and enjoy the power and sweet fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

It was now time to experience rural ministry in the Gambia. We travelled several hours to the far east “to journey” with two of GCMG’s passionate and faithful church planters and disciple-makers in Basse Santa Su. *Uncle KB and Auntie Toulie (not real names for security reasons) both came from muslim backgrounds who, as though they had been born at the wrong time, also saw the Lord through miraculous encounters. We were more than glad to journey with them from village to village, fellowship with their home churches and share DBS with them, dine with them, pray with them, hear amazing stories from one another and thank God together for the gift of His ministry of reconciliation and the opportunity to proclaim His saving grace in

Islamized communities and villages in the region. One more person came to faith in Christ Jesus in a DBS meeting before our two week stay in Basse would end.

As we were about to head back to the city, we sensed that we were not going to travel to Sierra Leone that week but the Lord didn't immediately tell us what the reason was. It was towards mid March and the COVID-19 pandemic had not yet made major headlines in West Africa. We kept praying, saw cheaper flight tickets available but our multiple attempts to book, all failed for one reason or another.

By the end of March, we saw the cheapest tickets ever and as close as we got to laying hands on them to fly in the first week of April, the pandemic would hit the region and borders would begin to close for all commercial flights. It was as if we had the last flight but God said, "We've got work to do sons". Absolute peace flooded our hearts and He reminded us again, "Stay with me, not too fast or too slow. Just go at my pace." The trip is not over.

By this time we knew we would stay for a little bit longer and we needed to ask the Holy Spirit what next for the pandemic— we don't want the pandemic to determine what we do but He determines what we do. How do we evangelistically keep in touch with people? How do we make good use of the lockdown periods for the purpose of discipleship?

He gave us the insight, an amazing idea of putting the DBS principles into easy and user-friendly animation videos to continue to reach individuals and families in their homes. We discovered our digital evangelism gift right here. Today, this explainer-animation disciple making videos are seen and shared near and far— mainly in the Gambia, Senegal, Ghana and Uganda. A lot of people are involved in sharing these videos with those they're also discipling and we really appreciate their partnership to digitally reach the lost. The "Creation to Christ" series, a chronological study journeying through the creation story to Jesus' ministry, has been the longest project we worked on during this unusual season. "The videos are easy to understand and really brought memories of some Bible stories he had heard in primary school," a muslim friend shares.

We have also been blessed to run a few DMM trainings— for one Mandinka family and two other groups. All of a sudden we could also bring in our

digital evangelism ideas to help a few others in GCMG to actively engage people with their devices. We felt really honoured to be part of that well received training.

Through our active preaching of the gospel when the lockdown restrictions were relaxed, the Lord has blessed our labour with a couple of discipleship/discovery groups, baptisms and few others to coach and mentor on regular basis. Which is why we always believe and clench to the fact that **we are not men working out our plans and strategies and are inviting God to be part of it. It is God Who is systematically and strategically at work in the Gambia and has invited us to be part of what He is doing and to journey along with Him.** We feel extremely honoured to be part of it all.

Few Testimonies

Over the past months, we have been encouraged with various testimonies ranging from God's provisions, to His deliverance for people we are engaged with, to miraculous encounters, etc. Here are a couple of them below:

- "There's something that runs in my heart anytime I see you guys, which you will not understand"— Aliu testifies. Our response: "It is Jesus who makes us who we are." Aliu accepted Christ that day and agreed to have a secret baptism before travelling to Senegal the following day. "Giving me a copy of the New Testament is one of the greatest things anyone has done for me," Aliu joyfully appreciated.
- In another village, with Pastor Alex (formerly Alhassan), a former Muslim, we encountered a young learned man, Lamin. He was actually debating with another person about the deity of Jesus Christ, when we met him. After he had given us the chance to talk, he would interrupt a few times to make a comment or refutation. But at a point he just stopped and said, "You are angels of God. Your faces are shining. I know God sent you to me". Recently, in another meeting with Lamin, being the third time in a period of about three months, Lamin accepted Christ. He told us that he believes the Holy Spirit is working in him. Lamin agreed to be baptised later on.
- Being inspired by missionary stories like one told by Jerry Trousdale, in his book, *Miraculous*

Movement, about a man who had been waiting under a tree since morning just to meet a missionary whom he had met in a dream, we also have been praying and waiting for unique miraculous encounters. And just recently, one man we have been trying to reach, but almost gave up on because of language barriers and his unavailability, came to our house early one morning. After trying the little we could, we decided to play a Bible passage in the Mandinka language for him. We got one boy to interpret. And with that opportunity, knowing that, Mohammed works from Monday to Saturday and closes late at night, we knew we had to make use of the visit. He believed the gospel message. And when he was asked, he said that, if it's fine with us, he could be baptised the same day. This was after briefly explaining baptism and its significance to him. It was at the beach ready for his baptism that a dream he had the previous night would begin to unfold. "I saw a dream of you guys the night before. You took me somewhere

to pray with me and the whole place was very bright," he recounted. A dream that would assure Mohammad that we knew of a path that he needed to follow which was why he needed to come see us immediately. When Mohammad got out of the water, in a careful baptism ceremony at the beach, he told us through the boy who interpreted for us that, he would like his whole family to become Christians. He now joins us for a home fellowship on a weekly basis.

The Lord keeps encouraging us with testimonies. In as much as we have had a good stay in the Gambia, it's our hope that we bear lasting fruits even after we have left. On several occasions, we were received and we proclaimed the peace and the Kingdom of God. On other occasions, we were rejected, the wolves gnashed their teeth against us and stopped others from listening to our message, yet we warned and moved on. So the Luke 10 trip still continues. It's not over yet because the harvest is still ongoing.

"But if a town refuses to welcome you, go out into its streets and say,
'We wipe even the dust of your town from our feet to show that we have
abandoned you to your fate. And know this—the Kingdom of God is near!'"
—Luke 10:10-11