

October 2013

It's possible to feel thick and slow even when there is obvious progress. Our team felt like we were trying to wade upstream against a strong current as our friends around us lived their "normal" village lives.

I went back to visit my former neighbor Jill fairly regularly. One day she shared that her mother was very ill in the hospital in Dar Es Salaam. Jill seemed extremely concerned. So I offered to pray for her healing in Jesus' name. The next time I went to visit Jill, she blurted out, "I believe in your Lord!" Her mother had recovered and returned home. When Jill asked her when she began to get better, she learned it was at the same time as we prayed for her.

A few days later I followed up on the conversation with a gospel of John. At that time Jill said joyfully to me, "I know Jesus is the Savior, and that He loves us very much." Her husband Jack's little brother Moses saw the gospel of John and followed me home to ask if he could have a copy, which I gave him gladly. A few days later I went to read the first chapter with her, and to talk together. She seemed happy to begin reading.

But on Sunday morning as some of our team invited her to join them on the porch for worship, she said loudly, "No, I can't come because I'm a Muslim and you are Christians. I don't believe in your Lord Jesus." What happened? Was she simply afraid of who might observe her, or had her previous confession of faith just been a momentary whim? We did not know. We continued to reach out to her in kindness.

It was a month of opportunities to minister to people. One day a couple of team members had the chance to pray with a lady for the restoration of her marriage. One day two girls listened to the account of the crucifixion and resurrection. One day three people along the road discussed with us Jesus' words, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to Me will never hunger, and whoever believes in Me will never thirst." Children were eager for the Word: One day five boys listened to the story of Samson, another day two girls listened to the story of Esther, and another day eight little girls heard the story of Noah as they drank freshly squeezed tangerine juice.

We had no idea whether any of our words were sinking in. In spite of our vacation time out of the village in July and August, our team was experiencing severe culture fatigue. The glamour of life in a rural village in Africa had worn off, and everything grim and gruesome felt incredibly heavy and hard. A plague of mice kept us all wakeful at night, trying to kill the pestilential creatures. Language study felt like hauling ourselves up a dangling rope, inch by slow painful inch. The daily proposals of marriage were extremely annoying to us women.

No one could agree about who should move to Nazareth. The decision stalled as Colin and I waited for the team to come to consensus and support one another in the

project. Meanwhile, the empty house was often used for out of town guests who came to visit our team. We rejoiced that none of them fell ill when they stayed there.

When Ruth's 30th birthday came, we had a ladies' party at my house, with salad, homemade English muffins, cake dipped in chocolate fondue. Then Scripture, and special prayers for her. Later we put together a jigsaw puzzle and chatted in English. Mary put little Sam in a tub of cool water to splash as the afternoon grew hot, then down for a nap. Girl time. Muted celebration. A small boost to morale, like floating quietly for an afternoon before wading heavily upstream again.



