

June 2014

Early in the month a trainer came to teach our team how to learn and tell Bible stories in a way that would be understandable to our local friends. Our students worked hard to learn to craft and tell 21 stories from the Bible, beginning with creation and ending with the prediction of Christ's return with a shout, and a description of heaven. On the last day of the seminar, Friday, we had gathered as a group. We still had a few stories to learn from our guest teacher, and we hoped to take the last hour of our time together to tell all 21 stories in succession after enjoying a special meal together. We were interrupted mid-morning by the arrival of two men. Isaiah's newly saved friend Joe brought another man who wanted to know whether Jesus could do anything about his problems. He was tormented by demonic spirits. "I seem to be in a pit and don't know how to get out. At night the spirits seem to choke me." He had seen the changes in Joe and wondered if he also could be rescued.

In the wise providence of God, Esther had translated the account of Jesus' deliverance of the Gerasene demoniac the previous night. She had practiced reading it aloud till it flowed. At Colin's invitation, she read that story to the men. Then Colin shared the gospel. We prayed with the men, and Peter took them home with him to explain the way of Jesus more fully. By the end of the day, all of us were rejoicing with another brother in Christ. He wanted to be called Francis.

They were days of Holy Spirit-stirrings. Two friends asked Ruth if prayer would really help with the evil spirits plaguing them. A friend asked Joseph if they could read Genesis together. Martha's friend Anita always asked if Martha had a story about Jesus for her to translate that day. Wherever we went, people were cautiously but interestedly asking questions. One of the shopkeeper's wives came at dusk one evening, to ask if I would pray for her to become pregnant. As we talked, it became evident she was very interested in Jesus. "My husband did not want me to come, but if you pray and God gives me a child, he will become convinced that your God is living and true." I told her with all confidence that we do serve a living God who is true and can be relied on, who sent His Son to pay for our sins.

On Saturday, June 6, the three new believing men were baptized in the small stream that ran behind our house. Colin, Peter and Joseph dug a certain area to make it deeper, and Isaiah, Joe and Francis were baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit by Pastor Bob, from Bethany. Francis was so fearful he was actually trembling. "I had a terrible headache this morning. It seemed the demons were tormenting me, trying to get me not to come. But Deborah gave me some aspirin and prayed for me, and I felt so strong I ran here from her house!" All our team came to witness the baptisms, and several village children, but although everyone in the village knew of the event, not one curious adult came to observe. Afterwards we sang together, prayed, and encouraged the men. The next day, Sunday, all of us gathered together in the open-air classroom and celebrated the Lord's Table, then ate a special lunch.

Would they suffer persecution from their families and friends because of their decision to publicly identify with Christ and His people in baptism? We waited to see, and prayed for their encouragement and strength not to turn back. July was the month of Ramadan, with much pressure to fast in order to earn merit and be a good Muslim. Would our friends participate in the fast, as usual? Or would they walk in the freedom for which Christ had set them free? And would the wives and children of Joe and Francis follow their lead into the family of God?

