

Lean Not on Your Own Understanding: Reflections on My Uganda Missions Trip

Exiting the plane, I tried to set my gaze on as much of this new, beautiful country as I could. As I beheld the dark green trees in the distance, I pulled my suitcases across the red, clay dirt that surrounded me; and all I could think was, “Wow, I cannot believe I’m in Uganda!” Although the time I spent in Uganda was remarkable, I must first explain how God instructed me to go to Uganda on a mission trip. Three years ago, during my first year of pharmacy school, God revealed to me that I must go to Africa and care for the poor people living on the streets. Several months later, God showed me in a dream where my mom was sitting in front of a computer that had a picture of Africa displayed on it. In the dream I leaned over my mother’s shoulder, pointed at the computer monitor with all the energy I could muster and exclaimed, “Look, mommy! That’s the part of Africa that I’m supposed to go to with Palm Beach Atlantic University!” As you can see, God indeed planted a desire in my heart to do missionary work in Uganda three years ago... and His plan finally came to fruition.

Even though I was excited to go on my first trip out of the country and complete an assignment that God had for my life, my experience in Uganda was not what I expected. For months I had imagined that when I stepped off the plane onto Ugandan soil that I would immediately fall in love with the country. However, that was not the case. Everyone in my group was in complete awe of this amazing country. But for the first few days, all I could think was that Uganda was “just okay”. The food, the culture, and the people captivated everyone’s heart immediately, so I couldn’t help but wonder why I didn’t share their enthusiasm. Suddenly I found myself doubting God’s commands and His plans for my life. My mind became consumed with thoughts of doubt, disappointment, and regret because I wasn’t having the jaw-dropping experience that I expected I’d have. So one night I prayed and asked God to reveal to me why He sent me to Uganda. I hoped that His answer would bring ease and clarity to my mind and heart.

God would not reveal His answer to my overwhelming doubts until our fourth clinic day, when I traveled with my team to a village named Lulagwe. Lulagwe consists primarily of refugees: men, women, and children, young and old. There’s an abundance of single-story, red brick buildings surrounded by patches of

grass that overlook more than an acre of land. As we arrived and greeted the people, their eyes were filled with hope and joy because their annual medical checkups had arrived. When we were about halfway through our patients for the day, I went on my lunch break. I entered one of the buildings where lunch was served. I sat on an old wooden bench in the back corner of a room that was only illuminated by natural light, and there I ate my peanut butter and jelly sandwich. My back was up against the hard wall and I stared out of the window, watching the people outside. I saw glimpses of people smiling, waving, and patiently waiting to be served. Observing the residents of Lulagwe, I noticed that although they were impoverished, these people were very content with their lives. Unfortunately, we struggle to find that same satisfaction in the United States... even though we have everything. That powerful, wake-up call reminded me that we must remain content in our calamities because Christ is strong in our weakness. I thought of the words of the Apostle Paul as he wrote to the Philippians from a prison cell: “I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength” (Phil 4:11-13, NIV). In an instant, and with a gracious answer to my prayer, God touched my heart and filled it with peace... and the first thought that popped into my mind was, “I kind of like Uganda.”

God used that quiet moment at lunch to show me that my call to Uganda was not a mistake. He immediately filled my heart with an overwhelming love for the Ugandan people, and all those feelings of doubt and unbelief left immediately. Despite all of the struggles that arose before and during this mission trip, I knew that God sent me to Uganda for a purpose. Thanks to His confirmation that I received in Lulagwe, I decided that I will return to Uganda next year and continue to fulfill God’s call on my life.

Proverbs 3:5 (ESV) “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.”

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School of Pharmacy (GSOP). I am currently the Regional Director of Christian Pharmacist Fellowship International’s (CPFI) South Atlantic Region for student chapters. I also went on my first medical missions trip this past summer to Uganda and offered medical care and pharmacy services to thousands of Ugandans. Over the past year, I have also become heavily involved in GSOP’s chapter of CPFI. I found that CPFI provides me with excellent and enjoyable opportunities to fellowship with my pharmacy family.

The Gospel According to You

by Anonymous

If none but you in the world today
Had tried to live the Christ like way,
Could the rest of the world look close at you
And find the path that is straight and true?
If none but you in the world so wide
Had found the Christ for his daily guide,
Would the things you do and the things you say
Lead others to live in His blessed way?
Ah, friends of the Christ, in the world today
Are many who watch you upon your way,
And look to the things you say and do
To measure the Christian standard true:
Men read and admire the Gospel of Christ
With its love so unfailing and true,
But what do they say and what do they think
Of the gospel according to you?
You are writing each day a letter to men
Take care that the writing is true;
**'Tis the only gospel that some men will read,
That gospel according to you.**