

Don't Grow Weary By Steve Nester

Our team was excited about going to Uganda for a medical mission trip in May 2016. This was our 4th trip to Uganda with Palm Beach Atlantic University Gregory School of Pharmacy in collaboration with Word In Deed Ministries. Our Florida group included new P1, P2, P3, and P4 students, several of whom were “repeat” missionaries; plus two returning graduate alumni, three professors, and one PBAU nursing student. My wife Lisa served as the partnering representative of Word In Deed Ministries, and I served as a PBAU Pharmacy School Preceptor. Another Word In Deed representative, Pete Lytle, is an E.R. nurse who joined us from Pennsylvania.

We had been meeting regularly for several months prior to the trip, so we thought we were well prepared to offer medical help, provide

especially during our 12-hour days. In my desire to serve, I was missing a spiritual connection that I had expected, and perhaps even took for granted on previous trips.

That's when God gently reminded me of His promise in Galatians 6:9-10 (NIV): “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”

Thank you, Lord, for the encouragement that I really needed.

The next morning brought another affirmation from God. We started our day as usual with prayer, a devotional, and singing worship songs.



spiritual encouragement, and share our testimonies to the people in the villages around Lake Victoria. God had blessed us with even more resources this year: a dental team from Hope Smiles joined us for 2 days, and a family planning team from a Ugandan women's health initiative offered family planning education, cervical cancer screenings, and birth control implants.

The four villages we served were very excited about getting free medical care from “the Mzungu's (African great lake area term for people of European descent)!” We treated over 900 patients during the 5 clinic days, which was far more than we had anticipated. My hope was to utilize my photography gifts more this year, and to devote more time in building relationships with the people I already knew. But there were many people with many needs; and thankfully, we now had more resources. Our first 3 days were challenging and overwhelming,

In God's abundant faithfulness, two students shared a devotional with the team... and the devotional was based on Galatians 6:9-10! Again I was reminded that His mercies are new every morning, so great is His faithfulness. As I was refreshed spiritually, I surrendered my plans and changed my attitude to, “Wow! We get to do this!” Another verse which encouraged me at that time was John 15:16 (NIV): “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you”.

After being fully recharged, I had incredible experiences of praying with people that day. I was humbled when my short English prayer for an elderly lady's ailments and spiritual concerns turned into 10 minutes of her desperate prayers, as she poured out her heart to God for His mercy. We were also able to bring witness of our Lord's grace through



the testimonies of the students, which were very powerful in showing that Mzungu's like us were also sinners in need of a Savior. We were able to proclaim the Name of Jesus as the reason why we were there, and to explain that He is the provider of their needs, also.

The morning we arrived at Lulagwe – a very remote refugee village that we had never been to before – we were surprised to see a small group of only about 30 people waiting for us. In the past, there are typically hundreds of people waiting for the clinics to open. At first it was discouraging to see such a small group, but God is faithful. At the end of the day, we treated over 150 people. Evidently, the reason for the small turnout that morning was because the people didn't think "the white man would come this far into the bush to see them." But the news spread quickly throughout the village: the free clinic was indeed open and the white man was indeed willing to help.

God has given me a passion for men's ministry. I am grateful that we were able to speak to the men of the Lulagwe Village and at the Ntanzi Church during Sunday school. We talked about what the Bible says a man should be, and how he should act. This is one of the reasons that I feel called to return to Uganda for medical missions, and for a longer period than just 2 weeks. I believe in my heart that God wants to grow disciples and form a strong men's ministry there.

There were many spiritual successes during this mission trip. One particular blessing was the reconciliation between two Ugandan leaders of two primary schools where we conduct our medical clinics. Through Word In Deed Ministries, individuals can sponsor students at these primary schools, which are affiliated with the local Presbyterian Churches. After almost 2 hours of intense discussion, crying, sharing, and bearing deep feelings, the two leaders reunited in Christian unity for

a common goal. Praise God! We also faced challenges and experienced grief and sorrow as my wife Lisa's sister died unexpectedly in Canada while we were away. Despite the heartache of loss and the challenges we faced, we were thankful, blessed, exhausted, and humbled to be God's hands and feet and we give Him all the glory for everything that was accomplished. Over 900 clinic patients were served! Among them, 7 patient surgeries were performed, 88 patients received dental work, 200 women received Afripads and another 158 were served by Women's health initiative; 100 families received mosquito nets; and 50 Bibles were given to the Ntgeneru school.

We are grateful for the many people and organizations, including CPFI, who support the fruitful work that God is doing in these Ugandan villages. Lord willing, I will be obedient to His call and return to foster relationships with these loving, joyful, and grateful people.

"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen." (1 Peter 4:10-11, NIV)

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