

# Just the Right Time

By Jacob Grasser

Ever since I was in 4<sup>th</sup> grade I have wanted to become a pharmacist. When I was in 10<sup>th</sup> grade, God started putting missions on my mind and tuning my ear to different ways that I could serve and witness to people. As I have progressed through undergraduate and professional program studies, I was presented with many different opportunities to participate in missions trips both internationally and domestically. Each trip solidified my calling to full-time missions even more. This past summer was my last free summer before APPE rotations and I wanted to use the time to get a glimpse of what different mission agencies were already practicing in the West African region and which one would be the best fit for my full-time service. After connecting with agencies at the Global Missions Health Conference (GMHC) and the Cross Conference, I had a pretty good idea of where I was interested in going. God opened doors for me to travel to Togo and Mali, working as a student pharmacist in both locations, and using my medical knowledge to obtain access to unreached areas where the Gospel isn't readily available.

The first country I visited was Togo. I stepped in for the pharmacist (who was

on furlough) by checking prescriptions and overseeing the technicians. In the second country, Mali, the hospital is nationally run and doesn't have a pharmacist on staff. After stepping into the pharmacy for a few days, I saw immense need – a need that I couldn't address in the short time I was there (only 1 month). I chose small things that I could improve and focused on empowering the technicians and staff through education and training instead of just checking prescriptions, so they could meet different needs after I left. In Mali, I also prayed with patients while on rounds. There was one patient that I connected with deeply.

Amadou lives at the hospital permanently. There aren't many patients who have permanent residence in the hospital, but his multiple sclerosis makes returning to his village extremely difficult since no one there is willing or able to adequately care for him. Amadou became a Christian when he witnessed the supernatural healing of a man in his village. Unable to move his body easily,



and being a relatively calm guy, Amadou described that story with great passion and energy in his voice and eyes. After hearing and seeing his desire to grow spiritually, the Holy Spirit provoked me to regularly stop by his room and pray with him. I would visit him with my translator, Yaya, and we would join Amadou on the floor, breaking out our Bibles and rooting through Scripture together. The literacy rate in Mali is extremely low, and Amadou would struggle greatly to read, often taking minutes to read a few sentences and not really comprehending any of it. Our time together would turn into teaching the meaning of the Scripture to him and then asking him questions about what he just heard. While Amadou processed things a little longer than normal and often had a hard time grasping the big picture of the passage, his desire to know Jesus (and to grow spiritually in a country where 90% of the people are Muslim) was undeniable and unquenchable.

A passage that Amadou and I worked through and examined regularly was Psalm 63, my favorite Psalm. This Psalm demonstrates the intense desire that David has for God:

*“You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water. I have seen you in the sanctuary and*





*beheld your power and your glory. Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you. On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night. Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings. I cling to you; your right hand upholds me. Those who want to kill me will be destroyed; they will go down to the depths of the earth. They will be given over to the sword and become food for jackals. But the king will rejoice in God; all who swear by God will glory in him, while the mouths of liars will be silenced.” (Psalm 63, NIV)*

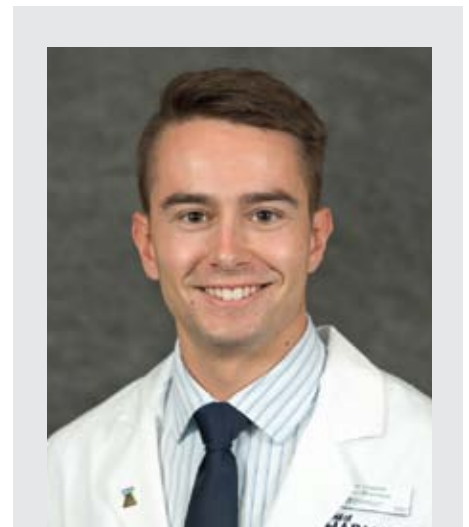
Verse 1 describes David’s soul and body thirsting and longing for God, as he is in a dry and weary land. Being in Sub-Saharan Africa, where it is brutally hot, this analogy made it easy for Amadou and I to get a vivid image of how intense David’s longing and desire was for God. After reading this passage and explaining to Amadou what it meant, I could see it click in his mind as he began to understand the message. Reading about David’s love for God increased Amadou’s love for God; and seeing Amadou comprehend and thirst for more Scripture also drew me closer to God and increased my joy in Him. I can relate to the words of the apostle Paul in Romans 1:12 [NIV], as Amadou and I

were “mutually encouraged by each other’s faith”.

One day when Amadou and I were sitting and talking, I asked him if he liked to watch soccer and if he had a favorite team. He said that he really loved it, but his disability made him unable to get to a TV to watch. He also couldn’t get outside to the field on the hospital grounds to watch when the staff would play. Soccer is my favorite sport both to play and watch; so from one lover of the sport to the next, I knew I had to do something. Every country that I visit, I purchase a soccer jersey of their national team. It’s just kind of my thing; the one souvenir that I really want to bring home. While I was sitting on the floor with Amadou, God was tugging at me to give him one of the jerseys I had just bought. I had been searching for years for a Didier Drogba jersey, the best player who has ever played for Cote d’Ivoire, and a former star of Chelsea, my favorite team. A few days before discovering that Amadou loved soccer, I found a Drogba jersey. Right size, right price; I bartered for it and proudly owned it. Little did I know that that purchase was not at all for myself, but rather for Amadou. I brought the jersey to Amadou the next day, explained to him who the player was, and gave him the jersey. While I cherished that jersey after years of searching, the look of thrill and delight in Amadou’s eyes and the wide smile that took over his face was completely worth it. My joy was increased exponentially from watching his joy expand. God waited until exactly the right moment to allow me to buy that jersey, and then give it up.

I share this story not to bring light to an act of service or an act of friendship, but rather an act of obedience. My heart did not want to part with that jersey. It would have been very easy for me to quench the Spirit and ignore the provoking I felt, leaving me with nothing more than a bright yellow shirt with a human’s name and number on the back. Something that I learned this summer was the exponential joy that will be

poured out onto us when we are obedient and follow the provoking of the Holy Spirit – even if it doesn’t make sense to our earthly minds. I have had times of working in pharmacies in the States when I sensed God provoking me to pray for someone, or to share a quick sentence of vulnerability and encouragement. Often, I fail and use busyness as an excuse. This summer, whenever I felt led, whatever it was, I did it. My ear is tuned to the voice of the Holy Spirit, and I listen for His calling. When God leads, there is nothing better than to follow. I recognize that this is harder than it sounds but trust me, there isn’t a life of deeper delight, pleasure, and friendship with the Lord than one of obedience and submission – recognizing that God is Sovereign, and He knows best.



*Jacob Grasser is a 3rd year professional pharmacy student at Cedarville University with a desire to go overseas and serve full-time after graduation. This past summer he was blessed with the opportunity to go to Togo and Mali and serve in hospital pharmacies for a month in each location. While in Mali, he had opportunities to preach in village churches, visit internally displaced people groups who had been attacked by terrorists, lead hospital-wide Bible studies, prayed and shared the Gospel with patients, and presented updated treatment guidelines to physicians and nursing staff.*