

Shaardas' Story

It's God's story!

shaarda.blogspot.com

shaarda@hotmail.com

PO Box 711
Soroti, Uganda



Josh, Mandy, Lydia, Grace, Luka & Emalai

Working together with local believers to disciple and train village churches.

The Value of Visiting

The value of relationships and hospitality is something that I love about life in Africa. Nothing makes me happier here than going to a friend's compound to greet. I love sitting together, watching village life happen, learning from their ways, listening to stories from the past, and watching my kids play or help the other kids. Sadly, too often I can't communicate much because of my lack of Ateso, but more and more Lydia and Grace translate for me. They are doing great learning Ateso and people love it! Even when we have to sit in silence I don't mind. I enjoy being with the people and they appreciate it.

Taking time to greet people, going to visit, and being hospitable is a valuable part of ministry here. The other day at church our neighbor stood to testify of her thankfulness for our love. She was in a motorcycle accident back in October and had many rods and pins in her leg. When we returned from home service we went and greeted her. She said that we entered into her pain by visiting, hearing the story, and praying with her. Who knew a visit would mean so much?

I have learned the importance of visiting people here. People feel encouraged, valued, loved and cared for by a simple visit. Relationships are the key in all ministry. People are the same worldwide. While in Michigan I was able to visit with many people who were surprised, encouraged and thankful for the simple act of giving them time, listening, and praying together. Don't ever doubt the love you can show through taking time to visit someone.



Seed Distribution

How can we show appreciation to people who are subsistence farmers? Peanuts! The teaching teams volunteer their time to teach and disciple people in different villages so we recently gave each team member a basin of peanuts to plant in their gardens. Few people here buy seeds to plant. They usually save part of the previous harvest to plant the following year. Unfortunately, due to last year's drought, people don't have enough to plant this year. We are hopeful that the rains continue as they have for the last 6 weeks so that the harvest will be plentiful this year.

We continue to hear testimonies of how God used last year's food distribution to touch people with His love. One Muslim man has two wives and did not know how to



feed his family. He was amazed that Christians would share with everyone, even a Muslim. Seeing how much God worked through the food distribution, we began to pray how God wants to continue to share His love with people here. The ripple effect of the drought is still evident; one effect is a lack of seeds/cuttings to plant this rainy season. We worked with local church leaders to purchase 280 sacks of cassava cuttings (used to plant cassava, a staple food here) for families in need. These cuttings were distributed to families of 15 churches in 7 villages.

Thank you for your prayers for rain. God is answering. Please pray that people will be good stewards of their land and that they will get an abundant harvest this year. Pray for God to bring a kingdom harvest through His love and provision.



Prison Ministry:

Michael stood before the Bible study group in the prison and said, "I have never stayed in prison as an inmate, but I know what it is to be a prisoner. In fact, I was a prisoner for a long time. Many people outside the prison are in greater bondage than you people in this prison. These Freedom in Christ materials teach truth that can set you free. They set me free." Michael is one of the pastors that completed the Freedom in Christ training last year. He had joined me at the Soroti prison to see the ministry. God had put prison ministry on his heart. He has since begun leading people through the Discipleship Course at a prison near his village every Sunday afternoon.

Two weeks later S, a member of the prison choir, pulled me aside after Freedom in Christ Bible study. The lesson had been "Win the Battle for Your Mind." The last part of the lesson looked at the difference between following God's plan and following our own plan. S shared that previously he had been a church planter, but later took a government position. A few years later he was involved in a crime and sentenced to 5 years. He said that this lesson helped him to see that he had failed to win the battle for his mind. He had followed his own plan to earn a salary instead of following God's plan which was to continue planting churches.

God is also working through the ward pastor training in the prison. Using Timothy Leadership materials, these inmates are learning how God can use them to care for other inmates. One lesson was about the importance of listening to others. Each ward pastor made his action plan and carried it out that week. One of them visited a Muslim man in his ward. That Muslim man was so impressed by how the pastor took time to really listen to him that he gave his life to Christ.

Another highlight in the last two months has been watching inmates "earn" Bibles by memorizing verses. Many inmates wanted a Bible, but I have found that free handouts are seldom a good idea. A friend suggested memory verses. I came up with a list of verses from the gospel of John, all having to do with salvation, serving God, and abiding in Christ. A week after an inmate has completed memorizing all 15 verses, I bring a Bible to the prison. Before receiving his Bible, he needs to recite a randomly chosen verse in front of the whole group. In the last six weeks, 24 inmates have received a Bible. Initially, people would read along to make sure an inmate recited the verse correctly. However, now half group knows the verses so they recognize immediately if someone is reciting the verse correctly.

Our numbers have declined in the prison Bible study, but God is still at work. Most days we have 30-40 inmates. Some are assigned work so they are unable to come. Others choose to play soccer or participate in other prison activities. Please pray that God will continue to transform the lives of those who come. Pray that they will have an effective witness to the other inmates and officers at the prison.

Please Send Support To:

Freedom in Christ Ministries – USA
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