

WHEN LIFE IS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT



We recently heard a compelling message from a visiting Pastor at our church about the persecuted church around the world.

It was very moving to hear about believers who are living in the most dangerous places to be a Christian and what this ongoing experience is like for them. While we know Uganda (the country in which we facilitate partnerships for Bright Hope World) is not one of the top fifty countries in the world for persecution against Christians, we could not help but think of our wonderful Bright Hope World partners because we know there are many challenges that they face every day.

This timely and powerful message reminded us of the unshakable faith of so many Christians in difficult places, including those working in Uganda. The five points raised in the message are

deeply challenging in drawing our attention to what it means to be a committed follower of Jesus even when life is extremely difficult.

1. *It means never standing alone:* Hebrews 10:25 (“not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another”) emphasises the importance of Christian community and mutual encouragement. Our partners are such an encouragement and inspiration to us when we visit, and we pray we too can be an encouragement to them as they continue their work in Uganda, and we journey alongside them. As Christians, we can journey together and never stand alone.
2. *It means depending on God in prayer:* Jeremiah 17:7 says, “But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him.” This verse highlights the contrast between relying on human strength (which leads to disappointment) and placing one’s ultimate hope and confidence in God. We pray alongside our partners and ask above all that their confidence is in Him.
3. *It means radical forgiveness:* Matthew 18:21-22 says, “Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.” We know that we are all called to forgive, and we acknowledge that in the environments in which our partners are working and living, there are situations where they might be wronged or hurt. We pray that even as they face these challenges they seek to forgive and heal.
4. *It means having an eternal view:* Philippians 1:21 says, “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” Christ is our focus, our goal, and our chief desire. The work our partners are doing is not just about changing peoples’ lives in the physical sense but bringing people to Christ and to the hope in Him and eternity this provides.
5. *It means going again:* Proverbs 24:16 says, “for though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again, but the wicked stumble when calamity strikes.” We know there are many challenges to the work our partners do, but God gives them – and us - strength and resilience to ‘go again’ and serve Him.

We thought very much of our partners as we listened to this and chose to share this encouragement with them, as well as with the supporters of Bright Hope World. Our concluding words to them were “Be encouraged, you are doing great things, and we look forward to continuing to walk alongside you.” That, we hope and pray, is what defines our partnerships with those serving God in difficult places.

Jason and Aimee McGregor,
Uganda Partnership Facilitators

BRIGHT HOPE WORLD NEWS

In sharing news, one is always inclined to want to share good news, but sometimes the nature of a fallen world makes that somewhat difficult.

In our last newsletter, we shared about the predicament of the people of Lebanon as war with Israel rages on. Unfortunately, this conflict feels like it is only getting worse. We are buoyed, however, by the remarkable story of survival that one of our partners in Lebanon recently shared with us. You can read about that a little later in our newsletter. It serves to remind us that, even in the midst of war, God is working. Please do continue to pray for the people of Lebanon and for an end to fighting.

The other big issue on our hearts at the moment is the outbreak of Ebola in the DRC.

As of June 1, there have been 263 cases and 43 confirmed deaths, but there are likely many more cases and deaths that have gone unreported. The particular strain of Ebola being spread is rare and hard to detect, even if testing kits were widely available. There is no current vaccine or treatment available for it. Between 30 and 50% of those infected by this strain of Ebola will die.

One of our DRC partners just reported that “the border with Uganda has been closed. The governor has issued more measures to help prevent the spread of the disease, including restriction to only 50 people in public gathering including churches. Food and living in general will definitely become hard.” Another advised that some bereaved families are taking still-infectious bodies from the morgue for cultural reasons, further raising the risk of spread of the disease.

We are stepping up to provide support to a number of our partners in the DRC, with a particular focus on preventative measures. We are also praying and would greatly value you praying with us. This has the potential to be a very deadly outbreak among a people already suffering from war.

Let us hope that the next time we share news, it is much more of the ‘good’ variety!

LIFE CHANGE STORY – TOGETHER FOR THE FAMILY, LEBANON



A story from under the rubble in the Bekaa Valley.

Aline awoke from unconsciousness into a world she no longer recognised. Everything around her was rubble; broken concrete, collapsed walls, and the home that once held warmth and laughter now caved in from every side. Above her, a large stone hung dangerously, as if it could fall at any moment.

Then she heard her father's voice, faint, choked, trembling: “Are you alive?” In that moment, nothing else mattered. Not the house, not the memories, not what was lost. The only thing that mattered was that she, her mother, and her father would make it out alive. She tried to answer, but her body would not respond. She was trapped, unable even to raise her voice.

Then suddenly, her memory returned... and she realised it was the season of the Resurrection. From deep within, she cried out silently: “Lord, you who raise the dead... raise us, my family and me!”

No one around her heard, but heaven did. With a quiet, unexplainable strength, she began to move. Slowly, painfully, she shifted through the debris, reaching toward her parents. By what could only be called a miracle, all three of them made it out alive. But life outside was not what she had hoped.

Grief was waiting. Her friend and her friend's parents who had been in the same building did not make it out. They had gone to heaven. Tears filled her eyes as her heart whispered the question: “Why me? Why was I saved while my friend was taken?”

Then, through the pain, she lifted her eyes and prayed: “Help me, Lord, to understand that there is still a purpose waiting for me. And here I am ready to fulfil it, with Your help.”

From beneath the ruins, Aline did not just come out alive. She came out carrying a calling story and a message of life.

For more information, visit: <https://www.brighthopeworld.com/partnerships.asp?pid=440>

BRIGHT HOPE WORLD PRAYER AND PRAISE

1. Pray for our partners serving in difficult circumstances (which is most of them!). Pray that the five points raised in Jason and Aimee's article would be true of them, and also of us.
2. Please continue to pray for the people of Lebanon, and especially for Aline, her family and the team at Together for the Family who are doing what they can to assist people affected by the devastation occurring in that country.
3. Pray for our partners in the Democratic Republic of Congo that are being badly affected by the current Ebola outbreak.
4. Please also continue to pray for our team as travel is still being impacted by world events. Four members of our team were due to be going to Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda next month, primarily to meet with our DRC partners, which will now not be possible. Travel costs have also continued to rise, and cancellations are becoming the norm.

Bright Hope World, PO Box 8928, Christchurch 8440, New Zealand

Phone: (03) 341 0933 | Fax: (03) 341 3363

brighthopeworld.com | facebook.com/brighthopeworld | lamai.co.nz | facebook.com/lamaicoffeenz