

Often times when you minister you pray, "I pray that God will use me to be a blessing to these people." This summer, that reversed for me. The people of Tanzania, Africa blessed me beyond words. They have taught me SO much through their way of life and the way that they live.

The people of Tanzania are warm, loving and happy people. Their way of life is so different from the life we live in America. When we went to the villages for the crusades, they would offer us stuff, yet they had so little. They have true happiness. They don't get happiness in the pleasures of things, but rather, they have true happiness with each other. You don't see kids sitting in front of a TV with a remote control or playing video games, instead, you see kids running in the fields playing tag, chasing the chickens, laughing and having a good time in the nature that God has created. They live in tight spaces with several family members in one house, they don't have electricity out in the villages, they don't have air conditioners, they don't have glass windows and to be transparent they go to the bathroom in a hole in the ground. Yet, they are some of the happiest people you will ever meet.

They walk on dirt paths to get water, go to the market, go to church, and walk to cow ponds to see people baptized in the name of Jesus. You see them wear the same dress all three days of the crusade because that is their BEST and yet we complain about what to wear for one day. They don't care if you carry a tune (thank you Jesus), they just want to worship with you.

I found out this summer that when you are part of the body of Christ, there is no language barrier. I saw adults and children that I prayed with receive the gift of the Holy Ghost and I felt the peace of God come on this lady that was demon possessed. All Glory belongs to God!!!

Going into this summer I didn't know what to expect. I didn't know what we would be doing or where we would be going, but I knew one thing for sure- God had called me for such a time as this and I trusted Him that He would do the rest. From the second week and beyond that I was in Africa, He began to use me. The first was getting the opportunity to speak at their Ladies Conference in Kiseke. It was there that I gained confidence in knowing that yes, God has called me here for such a time as this, and He gave me a confidence in speaking His word to His people. At that moment, I knew He had a plan and purpose for me being here. It was eye opening and humbling when one of my fellow Next Steppers told me God was speaking to her while I was preaching. I had just thought the message God gave me was for the Ladies, but God always has a plan. We might not see it, but He does.

In Shinyanga, we had a Youth Crusade. There were over 300 people from the village that came to the crusade. On Saturday, I had the opportunity to teach the children. I taught about Blind Bartimaeus who knew he had a need and that only Jesus could supply that need. He didn't allow the crowd to stop him from getting to Jesus, he had faith God was going to heal him, and Jesus did! I told them that God can do the same in their life and nothing is too small or too big for God! There was a great response & they could relate. As I taught Sunday School that Saturday, I felt something different in me. I felt as if God was giving me the boldness to speak His word and do it boldly before these people.

In between the morning service and afternoon service there was no greater joy than to run, play tag, blow bubbles and sing, "Making Melodies in My Heart" with the children. They have my heart! At this conference, there were 24 people filled with the gift of the Holy Ghost! That Sunday, we walked down a very long path to a cow pond where 56 people were baptized in the name of Jesus!!! I felt like we were living in bible days! We were definitely experiencing the book of Acts!!!! Mungu Ni Mwema!! God is good!

The next crusade we had was in Mara Region. In the mornings, we had Sunday School Training. We taught future Sunday school teachers tips and ideas to teach this future generation. I was blessed to be a small part of it. Our children, our future generation, will become pastors, missionaries, evangelists, Sunday school teachers, song leaders, etc. and we must raise them up and train them the right way. There were about 600 people in the afternoon services. They seemed to have all come out of nowhere.

Thursday night was a monumental night for me and I will never forget it. I was surrounded by children as I was praying with them and several of them received the gift of the Holy Ghost. As I was praying for them, I received emotional healing that I needed and realized that there is no language barrier when praying for people. They will feel your faith and your love for them. On Friday morning, there was a girl that had received the Holy Ghost Thursday night speak in tongues in fluent ENGLISH!!! She said, "in Jesus name, in Jesus name." There is nothing like that! That itself made me realize there is power in the Holy Ghost that goes beyond the language that you speak.

After the Mara crusade we went to the Serengeti and had some time to relax in the wilderness that God had created! It was beyond anything I could imagine. Waking up to two elephants behind the campground with the sunrise was beyond a dream! It was breathtaking. Tuesday night we had a time of worship and devotion. I was the one that spoke that night. As I had prepared for it and prayed over that night, I began to feel more sensitive to

God's voice. God gave me a specific word for my group. Yet, what was amazing was that the campground workers gathered around for the devotion and time of worship, as well. They were lifting their hands up and worshipping. I get tears in my eyes thinking about it! You never know how your lifestyle and just being who you are will impact someone's life. At that moment, I realized we should not be ashamed of who we are and who we serve! People are watching and there are people that need to know who Jesus is. We do not need to hide behind the curtain.

Next, we went to Musoma to a new work. It's hard to have a favorite church. Each crusade, each church, each person I have come in contact with have been amazing, but this church held a special place in my heart and it was hard to leave this church. Thursday, we had felt strongholds and so we went to the Smoak's hotel room to gather and pray. God moved and we felt the strongholds come down. God moved in the rest of the crusade. Four were baptized in the name of Jesus in Lake Victoria and this was HUGE for them. Sunday was special as we sang with the congregation in their native language, we prayed over the four walls of the building, and for this city. I felt there was going to be revival within this church and this city. Pastor James and his family have been there for a year and half and have built up the church starting with children. Children are our future!!! At this church we also got to be a part of giving the Presbyter a motorcycle so that he can travel to the different churches in his region. This was given by Sheaves For Christ and I have gained a new appreciation for SFC. It was an incredible thing to be a part of. Sheaves For Christ makes a DIFFERENCE!

Last, we ended in Mwanza. We had another Sunday school training in which we got the opportunity to teach them how to teach Sunday school. There were seven baptized in the name of Jesus, sixteen received the gift of the Holy Ghost and five claimed healing! Sunday was our last service of the trip. It was hard as we said goodbyes. The one that hit me the most was saying goodbye to Agnes who had done some traveling with us to the different villages. She translated for us when we spoke and quickly became a sweet friend to all of us! On Sunday, as we hugged her, she started crying and told us all "don't leave." At that moment, I definitely lost it. Her sweet spirit has blessed me!! I believe this summer has been just the beginning of what God has in store for this beautiful soul.

During the last week, we ended teaching at schools that God had opened the door at. I was in my element as I taught cute little first graders about King David. As we left this school, the Headmaster gave us a bible with a note written in it which said, "We feel honored and blessed to receive you at our school. God has a reason for your visit. Let none of you get tired, keep moving till you accomplish the God's mission He has put in you. Mark 16:15 Amen."

We also went to a secondary boarding school called Yuesta. The Aimer Brandi and I went and set it up and I will never forget the words that the Headmaster told us as we looked at the calendar and realized there was a religion class and we asked if we could come & join and he gave us free range to do whatever we wanted. His words were "maybe you could even reach the Muslims." There was nothing like the opportunity to freely worship and minister to these students! Thankful for these open doors! After returning to the states, I got word of the Headmaster writing a note to our group saying, "through the religion lessons God has done something through this community." Thankful to have been a small part of what God is doing in the children and young people of Tanzania!

This summer has given me a new perspective of missionaries. Yes, in my eyes, missionaries will always be HEROES ... But, truly, on a real note, these people are just ordinary people, that go through their own struggles and trials in life but have a vision and burden for souls that is contagious, ones that would give anything for anybody. They are ones that have answered a call, were willing to say YES to the call, and fulfill God's plan for their life. I've learned and gained SO much from not only these INCREDIBLE Missionaries, but AMAZING Christians that lead by example. They forever have impacted my life! I'm SO thankful for all the work and prayers they put into this summer for us!!! Words cannot express the GRATITUDE & LOVE I have for them!

As I left this beautiful continent of Africa, I will never forget monumental moments where I was changed forever. I received clarity, direction, and hope. Every tear I shed, every prayer I prayed, every person that prayed for me, every hug, high five and smile received, every sandy dirt path I walked on, every piece of sand that will be forever in my shoes, my heart will forever be in Africa. God ordains every step you take. I'm so thankful God sent me to Africa this summer. I wouldn't trade a thing for it! Thankful that God filled 108 with the most precious gift- the gift of the Holy Ghost, 87 were baptized in the name of Jesus in cow ponds and Lake Victoria and 78 people were healed. I was blessed these last two months to be a small part of what God has done in Tanzania and I am excited to see what MORE God is going to do in Tanzania! This isn't a goodbye to Africa, it is a see you later! I left a piece of my heart in Africa!

Jessica Braga







