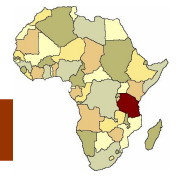


Tanzanian Testimony



VOLUME 2; ISSUE 7

LORIEN KNAPP

JULY 2008

Dear Friends,

July came and went so quickly that I hardly knew it even occurred. The adventures of Mwanza have been vast this month. I wandered the streets with my parents, began a new term at school after a month long break, and I was brought through some more growing pains of African Life. My parents and I took wounded children from the streets to the hospitals, we bandaged injuries, fed hungry tummies, and loved as many children as possible using Jesus as our model. TCRC founder Micah Ngussa spent much time in the streets doing this same work, and I am blessed to follow his example as I believe it to be a valuable outreach of TCRC. I think we need to know where these boys come from if we are to understand how to reach them. Often I am doing this work alone, or with other boys who come from the streets... It was encouraging to share this ministry with my parents, and they were equally blessed by their experiences.

The boys are calling me by a new name at TCRC, Mama Ushauri which means Mama Advice. The number of boys coming to talk to me is sometimes overwhelming, but the queuing system they have worked out is effective as they wait for the open chair to come and have their talk-time. The topics vary from Global Warming and the physiology of the eye to more serious subjects like death, poverty, and God's justice. Some boys want to know how airplanes work; others need to share the memories of their mothers who have passed away. I love to talk, and I love to be an attentive ear for them.

Having my parents join me at TCRC for most of this month was a breath of fresh air because they also like to talk a lot, and listen a lot... They were greatly appreciated by the boys. It was fascinating to eavesdrop on my parents and listen to the topics the boys were bringing to them. Some were questioning my mom about the behavior of pythons, others asking my dad to explain the person of Muhammad. I am always surprised by their questions, and delighted to minister to these young people who are so hungry for knowledge. God is feeding me in incredible ways by building relationships here. Please pray that I can maintain my energy level...

If you wish to offer financial support, mail check to:

**AIM: Finance PO Box 178
Pearl River NY 10965**

Checks should be made payable to AIM in order to be tax-deductible. Include a note stating my name, and the money will be credited to my account. Your support and encouragement is appreciated.

PRAYER CONCERNS:

- ✓ **Praise God for the blessing of sharing this ministry with family and guests who come to visit Mwanza.**
- ✓ **Praise God for His ability to change hearts, and reach to the broken and wounded.**
- ✓ **Please pray for language learning to accelerate so that I can minister in the heart language of these children.**
- ✓ **Please pray for my wisdom and discernment, especially as I try to find my specific place at TCRC and in this Mwanza ministry. Many thoughts are stirring in my heart but I need specific direction.**



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YOUTH MINISTRY

I do not have any biological children or brothers, but I try to view the children of TCRC and the streets as my own flesh and blood, as part of my family. God wants to claim each child for His Kingdom, and He has shown me that in order to reach these lost sheep I must try to love as He does, to see these children through His eyes...as a part of His family. He calls us His children, and I am comforted to know that He has adopted me, even though I am unworthy of such tremendous love. I pray these children can know Our Father by the love they experience from His other children.

Loving the wounded is not always an easy task. The life of the street has drawn the children of this region into many types of destructive behavior. Some days it is hard to love them as I see them making such poor choices. Many boys are using drugs, stealing, fighting, lying, hustling, and engaging in immoral sexual practices. Each of these things brings me great sadness. My human nature questions how such broken people can be trusted? How can I maintain any hope for them? But in moments of discouragement God clears my vision with one important word: LOVE

I have come to the conclusion that those involved in Youth Ministry must be prepared to have their hearts broken every day. After all, we are ministering to the unreached, not the mature in Spirit... Those who have been reached are often not yet weaned from drinking Spiritual MILK. We are led to prepare these brothers for SOLID food. The growing pains involved in becoming mature disciples are often painful, but growth must happen... Growth never ceases...

I reflect on my life before I knew God. There were so many ways I brought disappointment to those who loved me... there were so many people whom I hurt deeply. I was not deserving of love or kindness. I was difficult to love, and I could not be trusted. In the midst of my being separate from God, it was undeserved love that opened my eyes to HIS light. Some of HIS children flooded me with grace, not requiring me to change my behavior in order to be loved...they loved me in spite of myself. The power of that Godly love was the support I needed to ask God to transform me into a new creation. This model of love that I personally experienced is the one that I use in ministry with these boys.

I want to share my basic formula with you so that you will understand more of my work with the children: The more LOVE you show a child, using the definition of love from

I Corinthians 13, the more he will begin to TRUST you. As trust increases, a child tears down his walls and is able to be HONEST which encourages him to SHARE freely. Once the line of sharing is opened, built on a foundation of love and trust...the child is ready to HEAR your advice and BELIEVE what you are saying. As a Christian this becomes the most exciting part because the advice we are offering is BIBLICAL...and LIFE CHANGING!!!

Before coming to Christ, I was caught in the traps of street life. So when I see boys captured by certain sins, it is familiar to me. If a child has been using drugs, or is lying and scheming... often times I don't need to be told about the behavior because I can read the signs and draw pretty accurate conclusions. It breaks my heart to see them living such a life, but it is also a good challenge because I know that it is possible for them to change, and I am excited to witness how God will perform such miracles.

One of our boys was using drugs, and I met with him privately to tell him that I knew he was under the influence.... He became VERY angry with me, saying that I was accusing him unjustly and he DEMANDED an apology. I sat patiently offering him some street wisdom and Biblical advice, and then sent him on his way with no punishment. From that day forward I did not treat him any differently, and I continued to love him and pray for him... though I could see him distancing himself from me quite a bit.

I was surprised two weeks later when he approached me almost in tears... he wanted to know why I didn't punish him, why I did not send him back to the street, and why I continued to treat him well. He didn't understand why I had not reported him to any higher authorities. In the passing weeks he discovered that I had not shared our talk with any other person, and this caused him great confusion. In the world of street ethics, one of the biggest violations of the street community is to betray someone by telling their issues to others, be it peers or elders. Sharing someone's information can devastate a relationship. Working with these kids is almost like walking on a sheet of glass, where anything that looks like betrayal will shatter the glass beyond repair, leaving you with no foundation on

which to walk. Having experienced such little trust in life, this boy expected me to betray him, and was shocked when I proved myself trustworthy according to his standard. He was deeply moved because I maintained his confidence, deceptive as he was being with me; he was surprised that I didn't match his deception equally.

He confessed to me that he had indeed been using drugs, and he apologized for lying to me and becoming angry with me. I came to learn that this boy was facing an issue much bigger than drugs. His drug use was an attempt to escape a serious spiritual battle in need of POWERFUL Godly intervention. Together with God we began to battle his real issues, and he was released from a spiritual prison. Since this discussion, I have seen a remarkable change in this boy. I feel certain that at this time he is not using drugs because I see SO MUCH fruit coming from him. A profound peace and joy has come upon him and he is quickly growing in God's light.

I believe that if I had reported his drug use, we would have never had the opportunity for this important honest discussion. Seeing me as a trustworthy person allowed him to believe that I loved him. I find that most of the boys cannot believe the WORD – The Gospel – if it comes from the mouth of a person they do not trust. Many boys really doubt God's love because of the suffering they see and experience. I am honored and humbled each time I gain the trust of these children, and I am fortunate to say that I have begun to have more and more boys coming to me to confess their sins, and to ask for wisdom in avoiding temptations. They are seeking God!!! I have not asked boys to come to me to confess their sins; they are doing it on their own accord due to the Spirit moving within them!!!

I have been fearful about sharing this story as I might appear to be avoiding channels of discipline and order which are certainly important. I tell this story because I hope you can understand that the nature of this work is CHALLENGING as I have to speak the "language" of these unreached people. That language is an ethical framework which can seem quite confusing to non-street systems. I explain these situations so that you can know how to pray for

me, especially as I am asking for discernment. I don't want to compromise my relationship with the children or with the authorities, and sometimes this is a thin line to walk. In Missions we must use methods that specific people groups can understand so that they will become open to the Word. I have found that discipline in this culture is a very tricky business, but even more difficult with broken children. These kids certainly have a unique set of ministry parameters, and I am hoping to interact with them in ways which they can understand.

In working with these kids I have found that even though they are often not trustworthy, I MUST remain trustworthy. Even though they are not demonstrating love I MUST demonstrate love in all situations. I must meet them where they are because many do not have the strength to walk the distance to come to where I am. These kids are putting every adult under a microscope to try and test us... if we avoid the tests we will never reach them.

Often I wonder about the story where Jesus told the children to come to him. This is a favorite story of many of the boys because they assume the children to have been street children causing trouble. We are not told why the disciples did not want them around. Perhaps they assumed Jesus to be too busy and important to deal with children. Maybe the kids were being troublesome and noisy. Perhaps the kids were crowding Jesus thinking he had some candy since so many people kept gathering around...or they assumed him to be wealthy and wanted to rob him. Or maybe they really sensed the GLORY of who he was and they just wanted to be near...to touch Him, and feel the love radiating from Him. Regardless of WHY, Jesus embraced them and did not require anything of them, and he cautioned us to not prevent them from coming to be with Him. This is the model I hope to follow, reaching to the children regardless of their motives, giving them the map to discover our Savior.

I have been asking for prayer for discernment and wisdom for many months now, and I thank you for your faithfulness. I know that it is not me opening these doors with the boys. God is hearing the pleas of our hearts and pouring out His provision. Thank you all for teaching me SO much about love!!! I need you all each day as you encourage me, and remind me of HIS great and amazing LOVE.

1 Corinthians 13: 13

"These three remain; faith, hope, and love but the greatest of these is Love."