

How God Used Two Girls to Preach to Muslims in Africa

Before we arrived in the african village, God had prepared the people's hearts to know him. Even so, I wondered why he would entrust his message to me.

Millions of tiny flies were driving me crazy. We had driven out from the village to have some peace and quiet and find a place to pray. Now this! Surely the devil himself had sent these flies to torment us!

Although this was my second term of missionary work in West Africa, the last few weeks had been some of the most exciting of my career. Here in the northwestern corner of the Ivory Coast, working out from the small town of Toubia, my co-worker, Betty, and I were experiencing what it was like to pioneer a new field. Living at a mission station was totally different from living in an African village as we were doing now.

We had prayed much before our move to this unevangelized town. Now we recognized the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing a constant stream of visitors to the door of our tiny, two-room mud house with the grass roof. Some came from distant villages.

They always came with the same request: "We hear that you have come to tell us about God. Could we please hear your words?" Because we already spoke their language, which was French, we had an immediate rapport with these people.

We loved the children, too, and made them feel welcome. They sat and listened as we told them the wonderful stories of Jesus.

Today, however, we had fled from the village in our little French car, hoping to find a quiet refuge. We felt totally

drained of spiritual and physical strength.

Somehow today, it didn't seem as exciting as when we first moved into our little house. In fact, the whole task appeared utterly overwhelming.

A DAUNTING MISSION

We were two young girls, responsible for taking the gospel to 285 villages. Many of these were up to 50 miles away and accessible only over almost impassable bush roads. The villagers who lived in some of them had never even seen a white woman before, let alone spoken to one.

Betty had found her place under a large tree, and I thought I had mine until the flies attacked. They were getting in my eyes and up my nose, and when I opened my mouth to pray they flew in there, too.

My only recourse was to begin walking and try to keep ahead of them. As I walked, I poured out my frustrations to the Lord in great anguish of soul.

"Lord," I complained, "this whole thing is ridiculous. Here we are, two girls out in the middle of Africa, miles away from our homes in Australia and Canada. We're even miles away from our fellow missionaries.

"We are among people who feel that a woman is part of a man's possessions—like cows, dogs and bicycles. The more you can afford, the more you can have. Women are not even allowed in their Moslem mosques unless they are beyond child-bearing age, and then they must be in good standing."

Certainly it seemed that in this society, women had no right to teach men. Yet time after time we had stood before a crowd of 200 to 300 Moslem people in some distant village and told them the old, old story.

Always in the front row were the old men, many of them

teachers of the Quran, dressed in their flowing robes. The colored bands around their headgear told us that they had made the long journey to Mecca, showing their deep devotion to the prophet Muhammad. We were well aware that we were in danger of inciting their wrath.

Our message openly contradicted theirs, for we told them that keeping all the rules of their religion would never get them into heaven. The blood of Jesus, God's Son, was the only way.

Offended by this, they would ask, "How could God have a Son when He didn't have a wife?" We knew that if they ever chose to turn on us, we wouldn't have a chance. We would just disappear, and no one would dare tell what had happened to us.

We had also ventured out to preach in some distant pagan villages. These people were so involved in witchcraft that the Moslems were afraid to go as our guides.

"They eat people," we were told.

Still we went, for our commission to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15, NKJV) included those villages.

"You could have sent two big, strong men to do this job," I told God. "Men are much more respected in this culture. Or at least two bigger and stronger girls—that would have been more impressive."

I continued my lament, telling the Lord how we had to stand up in front of all these people and tell them that we had read from a book about a man named Jesus who had lived more than 2,000 years ago. No, we had never met this Man, but we were acquainted with Him personally.

Under all the opposing circumstances, how could we expect people to believe our message? At this point my one-sided conversation was suddenly interrupted.

The words "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27) began to pierce my troubled mind. Over and over the Holy Spirit repeated this phrase from the Word.

I knew it was truth; at least I thought I did. I had invited Jesus into my heart at a very young age. Why was this so important for me to know now?

I began walking back and forth on the same little trail. "Christ in you, the hope of glory," I repeated over and over again, trying to get the significance of the message.

TREASURE IN EARTHEN VESSELS

Suddenly, like a flash of lightning, I understood what the Holy Spirit was saying! The simplicity and wonder of it all left me astounded.

"Hazel Grace, I live in you. The fact that you are just a young girl out in the middle of Africa has nothing to do with the situation.

"What really matters is that I wanted to come to these villages, and you have been willing to bring Me here. The vessel that carries Me is not the important thing; it is the treasure in the earthen vessel that matters."

I was reminded of 2 Corinthians 4:7: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us."

As I meditated further, I saw that God had called many strong young men to do this job, but they had given Him reasons they couldn't go. "But," His voice whispered to me with great love and tenderness, "You have said yes to My call.

"Many years ago when you were just 17, I asked if you would be willing to go anywhere for Me, even to the worst place you could imagine. You wept a lot that night, but finally you said, 'Yes, I'll go.' This is one of the places I had in mind

when I asked you that question.”

I don't know if the flies stayed or left during this glorious encounter with the indwelling Christ, but I do know I was no longer aware of them. I wept and praised as wave after wave of this revelation swept over me.

Not only did the glory of this truth thrill me, but also the practicality of it became clear. With Jesus in me, I had no reason to fear anyone or anything, whether it was an entire village of pagans or a town of strong Moslems.

I was simply the vessel that carried Jesus. I was His mouthpiece to tell the world and, even more specifically, the people of the Touba area in the northwestern corner of the Ivory Coast, that He loved them and longed to deliver them from their sins, bondages and fears.

This revelation of “Christ in me” transformed my thinking. Although He expected me to use wisdom and not be foolhardy in my decisions, when I obeyed His orders, I was not responsible for my own protection.

God would always take care of His interests. This understanding gave me fresh boldness and authority to speak out His message, with an assurance that it was true and that Jesus Himself stood behind every word. *

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