

How I Adjusted My Spoiled American Attitude

I spent two weeks in February ministering in Uganda, where I've made some of the best friends on the planet. But life is not easy there—at least not for a *Mazungu* (white person) who has become so accustomed to American conveniences.

I've traveled to Africa 19 times, so it's not like I expect to have air conditioning there. I'm not shocked when the electricity goes out or I have to take a bucket bath because the water system stops working. I'm just grateful if I have access to an oscillating fan on really hot nights.

I've even grown to love the local food, which includes *matoke* (mashed green bananas) with peanut sauce, *posho* (cooked cornmeal, similar to grits) and grilled goat meat. Two years ago, I tried fried grasshoppers for the first time. On this trip, one of my hosts also slaughtered a pig in the front yard and roasted it for dinner. It was delicious.

I find it easy to adapt to Ugandan culture because I absolutely love the people, and I love what the Holy Spirit is doing in this country. Churches are alive, and Christians are serious about their faith.

One friend of mine there, Robert Kaahwa, has planted 19 churches since he planted his first in the town of Masindi in 2010. Another friend, Medad Birungi, has started a school for desperately poor children. It now has 600 students who are growing into mature disciples of Jesus. Uganda is fertile soil for the gospel.

I'd like to think I'm a true missionary at heart. But on this most recent trip, I disappointed myself when I began to complain about the horrible road conditions. After a six-hour drive from the capital city of Kampala to the town of Rwentobo

in the east, I was a very grumpy man.

Uganda does not have what we Americans would call interstate highways. The roads meander through many towns and villages, and each town has at least a dozen speed bumps to discourage fast drivers. It feels like you are driving on a washboard most of the time.

The speed bumps are so large that passengers are sometimes tossed into the ceilings of vehicles upon impact. By the time I arrived in Rwentobo, my nerves were rattled, my neck was sore and my fleshly nature was agitated.

After I settled in for the night and thanked God that I actually could take a hot shower for the first time in a week, I felt convicted by the Holy Spirit. I was reminded of Philippians 2:14, which says: "Do all things without murmuring and disputing."

Before going to sleep, I argued in my mind for a while with God. *Is it really wrong for me to complain about the terrible condition of Uganda's roads? There should be a law against speed bumps that jolt your body like that!*

The next morning, I was talking to a Ugandan friend about the road conditions. I learned that some communities demanded that speed bumps be placed in their towns after a speeding vehicle killed a child. "Many of those speed bumps in remote areas were put there to prevent more deaths on the roads," my friend said.

I swallowed hard and repented in my heart for my prideful attitude. I realized that the same speed bumps I was grumbling about very likely could have saved my life on that six-hour journey. I might have a sore neck, but I am alive!

I was also reminded in that moment about one of my spiritual heroes, Corrie ten Boom, who was sent to a German prison camp during World War II because she had protected Jews in her home

in Holland. After she complained about the lice in her bed at the camp, the Holy Spirit showed her that the prison guards didn't come into the barracks to interrupt her Bible study because they were afraid of the lice.

Corrie found a reason to be thankful for lice. And in Uganda, I found a reason to be thankful for giant speed bumps!

I encourage you to examine your attitude. Most Americans have no clue how the rest of the world lives. We complain when the Wi-Fi signal goes out, when our Amazon order doesn't arrive in two days or when we don't have enough legroom on our flight to our Orlando vacation. And then we post our childish complaints on social media so we can infect everyone with our toxic self-centeredness.

Remember Philippians 2:14. You can post it on your bathroom mirror before you enjoy your next hot shower in your air-conditioned house. Don't be a spoiled American. Be thankful for what you have.

Lee Grady was editor of Charisma for 11 years and now serves as contributing editor. He directs *The Mordecai Project* (themordecaiproject.org), an international ministry that protects women and girls from gender-based violence. His latest book is *Set My Heart on Fire* (Charisma House).

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