

News Brief

August

2019

Editor's Note:

The August News-Brief that follows is the first in a series about Team Ebenezer, four men from Uganda, all graduates and staff of GSSM, who have banded together to carry the Good News to some of the neediest people on earth. The results of their deep commitment to Christ is astonishing. We trust you will rejoice with us as you observe how God takes 4 ordinary men and equips them to do extraordinary things. To God be the glory!



Isaac, Patrick, Barnabas, Jimmy, and David

How Do You Measure Success?

Many in our world would suggest if one is wealthy, you are a success. Others might say that a person who has become famous like a movie star, a sports hero, a rock star, a popular politician or perhaps some great leaders in different fields of service are clothed in the garment we call success.

But is this genuine success? Does one's position or wealth cast that individual into the category of people who seem to have it all together and therefore they can proudly wear the badge that says "I am successful?" Not necessarily. But read on.

Sometimes success springs forth in the most unlikely places. How about a dirty, smelly slum in Uganda, East Africa for example. There in the midst of open sewers, garbage strewn everywhere and where the inhabitants of this undesirable place won't be found wearing fine suits and beautiful dresses but rather are clothed with dirty and torn coverings that represent the only set of clothes they have. And shoes? Most go barefoot but some have found discarded flip-flops or in some rare cases are able to purchase a pair at a very low price.

Those with flip flops are able to ward off, to some degree, the sting of broken glass, thorns and other debris that bite through the bottom of calloused feet or somehow find their unwanted piercing into worn flip-flops.



So What's With Success and the Slums?

Rewind several years and picture the former National Soccer Coach of Uganda, Barnabas Mwesiga, arriving at a slum and being surrounded by a group of excited children. Barnabas is admired by many as the finest soccer coach in Uganda's history. Then it happened.

Barnabas spotted a shy, 8 year old boy standing in the shadows. When the former national coach walked over to the young boy, the 8 year old was shocked.

Somehow Barnabas was attracted to this boy in spite of being overwhelmed by dozens of others who were craving his attention.

Thus began a friendship during which time Barnabas mentored this young lad after he accepted Christ as his Saviour. Later Barnabas recommended him to be a part of an outreach team that Mwesiga had organized.

A few years passed. At this point Barnabas left the organization with whom he was working and joined up with Russ Carr and Global School of Sports Ministry. The boy with whom Barnabas was mentoring was now a young man, married with their first child on the way.



Suddenly, with little warning, this man's world crashed.

He was dismissed from the organization he had worked with for several years. The administration who let him go stated he just didn't fit, wasn't very bright, would not be able to fulfill his responsibilities and was only a part of the organization because Barnabas had recommended him.

Crushed, this young man did the only thing he knew to do.

He fell on his knees and asked the Lord to please help him. He surrendered his life totally to God and with a flood of tears streaming down his face he cried out to his heavenly father and submitted himself to do whatever the Lord would ask him to do. With his wife's love and support, he continued to pray and wait for the Lord's direction and help.

Then one morning following his quiet time and prayer, this jobless and broken young man felt led to walk around one of the many slums that seemingly were endless as they continued to expand in the shadows of the high rise buildings that dotted the skyline of Kampala, Uganda's capital.



As he wandered about on the edge of a slum dominated by Muslims, he spotted 5 boys playing with a tattered soccer ball.

Fascinated, he went up to the boys and asked them if they had a coach.

The boys responded with a chorus of "no!" "Would you like one?", this jobless young man asked. The 5 boys lit up and answered with an enthusiastic "yes!"

Thus began the incredible journey of a future Team Ebenezer member, Jimmy Kalyango. Jimmy started with the 5 boys and before long dozens of other young lads joined in.



As a result, Jimmy formed several teams and organized a league for them. As the numbers continued to grow, Jimmy recruited a few friends to help him. As Kalyango got to know the boys, his heart was deeply touched by their overwhelming needs.

Hunger was first on his list to attack.

When he asked his friends if they could assist with this need, several of them left. Somehow Jimmy was able to raise a few shillings to help purchase some sugar cane.

Although not the most nourishing food the little stalks of sugar cane helped quiet the hunger pangs and give a little relief to these hungry children who constantly searched the piles of garbage that surrounded them to find some morsel of food.

Later, Jimmy would go door to door...

...in the slums to plead for a little help to ward off starvation that stalked these young ones. Some of the slum residents were able to give Jimmy a cup of beans or rice. Next Jimmy went to some of the vendors that surrounded the slums and thankfully a number of them were willing to help. Of course his mentor, Barnabas Mwesiga, dug deep in his shallow pockets to help as well.



As time marched on, Jimmy added more programs to meet other needs.

He formed a children's choir with voices like Angels, opened a Sunday school in a rented, run down building where he could disciple new believers and teach biblical principles.

He formed outreach soccer teams and trained them in evangelism and discipleship. They would travel to schools in the area walking to many of them as they competed with their teams and witnessed to them after every match. Many would accept Christ and follow-up would become another concern of Jimmy's. Barnabas once again stepped in and made Global's highly used van available to Jimmy so they could travel to distant schools to share the Good News. Have you ever seen a small van packed with 18-20 children? Jimmy and/or Barnabas would sometimes have to make 2 or more trips to get the team or teams to their playing venue.

As we fast forward to the present we find Jimmy is now working in 3 slums, feeds over 500 children each day...

...has trained and organized more and more sports teams, shared the Gospel with hundreds and most recently, with the help of his mentor and several friends, initiated a camp program whereby a select number of slum children, usually 60 or more of them, are transported to a camp site about 50 miles away. At the campsite a kind-hearted administrator of a school allowed these children to use the school facility during a school holiday. However, the school administration had one proviso. Jimmy had to allow some of their students to attend the camp. The camp would then swell to a hundred or more.

For nearly a week these children receive 3 meals a day, spend part of each morning in praise and worship which they love, are trained in soccer and other sports skills, are taught how to use sports to evangelize and disciple and then they get some actual experience in sharing their faith when they compete with some of the local teams. The day is ended with dinner followed by singing some praise songs, corporate worship, sometimes a video and ending with a season of prayer.

As if this was not enough, a pair of farm projects are now underway on two plots of land several miles outside Kampala that were recently purchased with the help from a church in Truckee, California along with several other friends of GSSM.

Food is grown on parts of the land to help feed many of the slum children and adults along with providing food for some of the staff families who are volunteering. A soccer field has also been cleared enabling the children and some village teams to have a decent playing field and a place for other activities.



On one of the two plots of land, a "bore hole" (well) was dug and now water is available for the farm project in addition to providing clean water for people in villages nearby. The bore hole is now in constant use.



A classroom is also being built and nearly completed that will enable Jimmy and his volunteers to teach life skills to the slum children equipping them to find employment. In addition to the life skills curriculum, Jimmy and his volunteers will provide a basic education for a large number of slum children who cannot go to school because they lack the fees necessary to attend.

Jimmy has also been asked by a number of single mothers who are dying of AIDS to please take their children and find homes for them. Almost all of these single mothers are now believers because Jimmy shared Christ with them. Their husbands had either died of AIDS or left to find work but never returned. Jimmy is working on a plan to try to care for these soon to be orphans.

Then to top everything off, Jimmy is part of Team Ebenezer whose goal is to reach every town and village in Uganda with the Good News and to train others to be sports ministry leaders using GSSM's curriculum and in so doing plant more and more sports outreach programs throughout the country.

And by the way, the men who represent Team Ebenezer are Barnabas Mwesiga's "Timothies" who are being trained and equipped to take over the ministry when Barnabas is no longer able to lead the program. Life expectancy in Uganda is age 50; Barnabas is now in his 70's.



The next news-brief will introduce you to a second member of Team Ebenezer. Actually, I can't wait for you to meet each of these incredible men. Please add this quartet to your prayer list: David, Isaac, Patrick and Jimmy. They are truly remarkable men....game changers...deeply committed men who are not only Christ followers but are men who are willing to invest their lives in serving the Lord no matter what the cost.

Currently these men are surviving on a very small stipend that barely keeps them and their families going. Should you feel led to help Team Ebenezer, 100% of every penny you designate will go towards increasing their support and enable them to keep going in spite of numerous challenges. Thank you for your prayerful consideration.

Blessings!

