

12th January 2010

Dear Team,

God is great!

Yesterday I emailed one of my closest friends in Burundi, who runs what I believe in due course will be the most strategic Christian ministry in the country. I had some incredible personal news for him. I'm changing his name here to protect his identity and that of his organization, as things are too volatile right now - these prayer letters get forwarded to all sorts of people and could easily end up in the wrong hands. (One of our key people was murdered a couple of years ago in front of his wife and kids as a result of his work with M's).

So 'Peter', founder of 'Burundi Bible Ministry', started BBM two years ago. We got our Masters together at All Nations Christian College, England's leading mission training institution, and he was sponsored by John Stott no less because he is so gifted. As with any pioneer ministry, Peter and his wife have been under interminable stress and pressure. There were so many calls on his time. Ministry as well as family finances were permanently stretched to breaking point. It was unsustainable.

As GLO we want to get behind the most strategic leaders in the country to empower and release them to accomplish their God-given dreams. Yet many leaders are stunted in their effectiveness because they simply can't afford to live and pay the bills. So my email was to tell Peter that we had agreed to finance the building of his house, to free him up from so much added tension and pressure and thereby help him more fully concentrate on God's work through BBM. His reply was as follows:

"Dear brother in Christ,

There are moments in life when we are not sure whether we are dreaming or living a reality. Yesterday was such a kind of day. When my wife told me of your email, I was standing near a swimming pool ready to baptize an Imam, the third most senior Muslim in Burundi. I had had to stop a meeting I was having upcountry with the leadership team of the Great Lakes Initiative for Reconciliation to urgently come back to Bujumbura because this man was asking to be baptized as he thought he might get killed because there were already death threats from the Muslim community. He had come to BBM on Sunday (I was upcountry at the time) after Jesus appeared to him and to his wife on Saturday night and asked him to stop worshipping a dead religion. He said he did not know who the One he saw was. Elihud and Bosco at BBM explained to him that it was Jesus. They prayed for him and delivered him from many demons. He had been involved in all sorts of witchcraft and magic. After his baptism yesterday, we arranged to burn his tools, which included all sorts of things: clothings, Koranic books, bones, threads, pens etc. He resigned from his position on the Islamic Council for Burundi today and we are supposed to offer him, his wife and two children support. Of which kind, we don't know exactly yet.

Regarding your email and the incredible news of the house - to tell you the truth, I am "like them that dream" to use the Psalmist's expression. Whatever it may be, its significance to me goes well beyond having a place we can call 'home'. It is a living testimony that God is to me what others said he is: "The One who sees me". Simon, the coming of this man (his name was Omar but yesterday he asked to be called Paul) opens a new chapter for BBM and already before that I needed God to show me where and how I stand in relation to so many unbelievable pressures. May His name be glorified!"

Wow!

This is the latest of a number of stories I could share with you of Muslim leaders coming to know Jesus. The cost of their decision is huge. They usually lose everything - job, livelihood, house, children, family network, safety. Saleh of Prayer Letter no.34 had to flee several times for his life and is now destitute in Eastern Congo. From being a chauffeur-driven Iman he now sleeps under a car bitten raw by mosquitoes as a security guard on a few bucks a month. From riches to rags, his testimony remains: "I've lost everything, but I've got peace in my heart, I've got Jesus!" I find it profoundly challenging and humbling what these men are prepared to suffer for the Truth that sets them free.

One of our team reaching out to Muslims said to me: "Simon, I hesitate to share Jesus with Muslims, because I know that the cost for them to convert will be so high. If I can't provide them with a living, I am basically contributing to their being rendered destitute."

So Omar-now-Paul is the latest that needs our help. Please pray for him, his wife, and their children - that God would keep them safe, that Paul would become a powerful witness to the many others in Burundi who want to follow in his footsteps and convert from Islam to Christ, and that God would provide them with an alternative source of revenue to live by.

Or could you be the answer to that last prayer? If so, please reply to this with whatever contribution to the cause. You see, there are many other brothers and sisters in Christ from a Muslim background we'd like to support who are suffering unimaginably, and they have the potential to have a huge impact in redressing the rapidly expanding Muslim community.

My favorite worship song includes the words:

I've given like a beggar but lived like the rich
I've crafted myself a more comfortable cross
But what I'm called to is deeper than this
It's time you had my whole life
Jesus have it all.

So I resolve to give it all
Some things must die, some things must live
Not what can I gain, but what can I give
If much is required when much is received
Then you can have my whole life
Jesus have it all.

Worth meditating on...

Simon Guillebaud
Great Lakes Outreach