



BRANDON VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

April 2022

Editor Janelle Daum

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“But the king of the Ammonites did not listen to the words of Jephthah that he sent to him.”

Judges 11:28

Last month we continued our study into the lives of men and women of faith as we looked at Jephthah and the importance of forgiveness. He showed us the depth of his spiritual maturity as he forgave the people of Gilead and agreed to return to his home and become their leader as they faced the crushing oppression of the Ammonites. He had been treated wrongly by his people, but when they needed him he stepped up to the plate and served them. As we shared last month, “The level of our faith is seen in the characteristics we display when the heat is on and we are facing unfairness or injustice. If we live by

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faith we will respond differently than those who have no faith.”

We see that borne out as Jephthah goes on to show us the importance of communication in the life of faith. Communication is difficult, no matter how perfect the circumstances might be, but we must seek it. Jephthah understood that. It’s a matter of faith.

Jephthah was identified as a mighty warrior, and the assumption is that he would immediately go to war against the Ammonites. But he didn’t do that. Instead of jumping into a major battle he tried peaceful communication first.

His message to the Ammonites in Judges 11:12 was, “*What did we do to deserve this threat?*” The king of the Ammonites sent back word that the problem was a land dispute. The Ammonites felt that they owned part of the land of Gilead and it was stolen from them when the people of Israel were still wandering in the wilderness. They were willing to settle peaceably if Gilead gave up that land.

The problem is that they were twisting the truth. The children of Israel didn’t steal land. In vv.14-17 Jephthah points out that they always asked for permission to cross different lands and if they didn’t receive it they stayed where they were. When they did move, they didn’t cross forbidden land. So instead of going through Edom and Moab, the direct route, they honored the response of those two kings, and they took the long way around being careful to stay on land where they had received permission. They weren’t seeking fights and they had not stolen any land from the Ammonites.

The land in dispute actually belonged to the Amorites. Verses 19-22 recount how Israel had sent messengers to Sihon, king of the

Amorites, requesting permission to cross his land. Sihon didn't trust Israel, so he gathered his army and fought against Israel. Verse 21 tells us the result, *"And the Lord, the God of Israel, gave Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel, and they defeated them. So Israel took possession of all the territory of the land of the Amorites, who inhabited that country."*

Verse 22 clearly defines the boundaries of the land that Israel took over in that victory and it didn't include any land that belonged to the kingdom of Ammon. Israel had owned that land for 300 years without dispute until the Ammonites decided that they wanted it and started the oppression of the people of Israel who lived in Gilead. Jephthah puts this on the level of a spiritual battle when he says in v.27 that the Lord will be the judge of who is right, "I therefore have not sinned against you, and you do me wrong by making war on me. The Lord, the Judge, decide this day between the people of Israel and the people of Ammon."

To be a person of faith doesn't mean that you are a wimp who gives in to anyone who might attack you. It does mean that you are a person committed to the truth and to communicating that truth. It's easy to turn to lies to try to make yourself look good, but only the truth can make us holy. We need to seek truth and hold onto it with all our might. And we need to communicate truth in everything we say and do.

God has established the high ground for men and women of faith to walk on. To walk on that high ground of faith means that we live forgiveness and we communicate truth in every situation we face in life. Those are the characteristics of faith that show Christ in our lives.
Blessings, Pastor Randy

UPCOMING EVENTS FOR APRIL AND BEYOND

EVENTS CALENDAR 2022:

Good Friday Hymn Sing/Communion Service on April 15th at 5:30 pm, followed by a potluck. Please bring a main dish and a salad or dessert.

Easter schedule for Sunday April 17th:
Sunrise Service at 7:30 a.m.
Breakfast at 8 a.m. Sign-up sheet for breakfast items will be on the kitchen counter.
Easter Service from 9 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

Sunday's

9:30 a.m. Worship Service

10:30 a.m. Fellowship

10:45 a.m. Sunday School for the Whole Family

Wednesday's

6:30 p.m. Awana Clubs

7:45 p.m. Middle & High School Youth Group

Thursday's

3 p.m. Prayer & Women's Bible Study at BVBC

6:30 p.m. Women's Evening Bible Study meets at various homes. Contact Stacy Frost for location.

Saturday's

8 a.m. Men's Bible Study on Zoom (1st & 3rd Saturdays of the month)

Sunday, April 17, Easter Sunday, Newsletter Articles are Due

CRISIS IN UKRAINE



The “Help Ukraine” fund has assisted in 51 projects and aided 21,000 people. The following came from a contact through a SEND missionary:

Our Pastor sent you his thanks. You cannot imagine how people are tearfully thanking you! And they have requested to personally write to thank you.

“Today being left without work in my city, I understand that any means to live can only come to us through a miracle. Through friends. Praise God, my family (my wife and three kids) are now out of Ukraine and in the care of good people. For myself, considering today’s wartime prices for groceries, a purchase meant to last two weeks is almost double. I can economize by consuming whatever food previously canned/preserved is left (for example potatoes and pickles stored in the root cellar). But even with that, the help was so relevant in other ways. In addition, I visit people- neighbors, church members. For them this time is also not so sweet. Yesterday I helped one of the brothers from our church. I passed onto him some money to fix his car. With this car, he’s been serving as a volunteer, delivering medicine, and food. A huge thank you for this help!”

VOICE OF THE MARTYRS



A Family on the Frontlines

When Mahmud initially heard the gospel from a missionary, he resisted and felt afraid. He didn't want to lose his Muslim identity, which was intertwined with his identity as a Fulani living in the African country of Niger.

Later, when he discussed the Quran and the Bible with the missionary, Mahmud became convinced that the Bible was the truth, and he decided to follow Jesus Christ. His wife and 11 children also put their faith in Christ.

“Since I accepted Christ, I've never had a fear to share the gospel or to do something to bring God glory,” he said. “What I felt in my heart when I accepted Jesus was to go and share the gospel and to pray for those who are sick.”

Mahmud worked side by side with the missionary for the next 16 years, living with him for much of that time. And as Mahmud's children became adults, five of them joined him in sharing the gospel with the Fulani.

Mahmud is unsure how many Fulani he has helped lead to Christ, but he and his family believe the number to be in the thousands. Each of his children said they have led hundreds of people to Christ themselves. These victories for God's kingdom have not been won without a cost, however.

Although many Nigerian Fulani are receptive to the gospel, those who place their faith in Christ are not immune to the kind of treatment faced by their brothers and sisters in other Islamic contexts. "I have found many cases of persecution," Mahmud said. "A lot of the people are persecuted by their family. Many of them are chased away."

Mahmud said he and his children often tell new Christians they should expect persecution. "If Christ Himself was persecuted, it is natural [that His followers will be persecuted]," he said.

Though Mahmud hasn't experienced much persecution, some of his children have. And despite the likelihood of additional persecution, Mahmud and his family continue to share the gospel. VOM provides them with audio Bibles and motorcycles to help them reach more villages.

Mahmud shows no signs of slowing down, and he said he'll continue sharing the gospel as long as God allows. "When I do the work of God," he said, "I never get tired and I don't feel hungry. All the family knows about that. I even forget to eat. They come and say, 'You should eat.'"

Please partner in prayer with families like Mahmud's as they work to advance God's kingdom.

MISSIONARY OF THE MONTH

AMANDA BENSON - PHILIPPINES



March 1, 2022

THE NEXT STEP

I looked ahead and saw the head lamps about 50 feet above me. I wasn't sure what path they took to get there. Where do I put my feet and hands? I knew where I needed to get to, but I wasn't sure of the right path to get there. My own head lamp only let me see so far in front of me. I looked around, trying to decide the best path up the boulders, and I took the next step.

Hiking Mt. Apo (the tallest mountain/volcano in the Philippines) last week was fun but also challenging. On day two, summit day, we left at 3:20 in the morning, thus hiking the first three hours in the dark with only our head lamps to illuminate the path. I felt like Gollum from Lord of the Rings as I used my hands and feet to climb the boulders in the dark, not knowing if a slip backwards would have me rolling down the mountain. But we took each step, following our guide, and eventually made it to our destination. On the way back down the mountain, I realized that the mountain wasn't as steep as it seemed, and there really was no right path through the boulders. I just needed to keep going toward the goal, taking the steps that were in front of me as I followed the guide.

These truths have sunk deep into my heart as I consider the new ministry I believe God is calling my friend and me to for the upcoming school year. Watch the video to find out what it is!

We are SO excited about this opportunity and how God is leading, but it

also feels like a huge step of faith. We see the vision for where we want to be, but we aren't really sure how to get there. We don't really have a clear view of the path (or paths) that it might take to get there. We don't know what house we will have or when God will show it to us. We don't know if there will be women to stay with us next year. We don't know where we will get what we need to furnish the house.

But we have confidence in our Guide. We firmly believe He is leading us on this path, and that if He is, He will provide what we need. He will guide us and lead us, sometimes from right in front of us and sometimes from 50 feet ahead as we follow Him in faith. And when we get to the goal, we'll be able to look back and see the path that He led us on – a path that will bring Him glory. That is our heart's desire – that God will be glorified in this ministry, and that He will tell a story where people will listen and say “only God could have done that.”

Please pray with us as we walk by faith and trust God to guide us and provide for this ministry as He is leading.

Thank you in advance for your part in this upcoming ministry!

Amanda

P.S. Have questions or things you want to know about this ministry? Please respond to this email and let me know about them! I'll be happy to answer what I can!

Praises

- For a safe hike up Mt. Apo! One of my friends had torn her ACL two weeks before the trek, and she did the whole thing with no knee pain! Praise God! We also had no major injuries and everyone summited the mountain!
- We have been able to start face-to-face school, and just yesterday we were able to have all kids here four days a week instead of doing cohorts (where they came two days a week). It's so great that we are making progress and so awesome to have kids in the classrooms!

Prayer Requests

- Pray for continued transition to face-to-face school. It seems to be going fairly smoothly, though there are still things to work out. Plus there will be more internal processing that will happen, especially for these students who have been in quarantine for the last two years.
- Pray for staff for the upcoming school year. There are many needs, and for

Middle School, we need an entire English and Science department. We need someone to teach computers, too. We also hope to have a counselor and a few other positions. Pray that God would bring the right people.

- Pray that God would provide us with a house for this upcoming ministry next year. Pray that it would be what we need, close to school, and in our price range. Pray that God would bring the right women to stay with us next year, too.

March 16, 2022

PowerUp! Prayer Update

Praises

- My friend and I were able to look at the potential house on Friday, and we really love it! We are waiting to hear back on some questions from the landlord but are hoping to be able to pursue it.

- We were able to start our after school Bible study groups again in person (we've been meeting some, but we needed to reorganize now that we can meet after school). It was SO great to have an in person group and to get to hang out and have fun and eat food and laugh. I'm looking forward to the 9 more weeks we have together before summer!

- God has provided a middle school counselor for us for next year! He is Filipino but was raised in America and is already here in country, so he is possibly going to start working soon! I was praying for a male counselor to balance out the female principal and myself next year. :)

Prayer Requests

- We have parent-teacher conferences the next two days. Pray they are fruitful.

- Pray that we would get answers to our questions about the house and that the Lord would lead us clearly. Pray that He would provide all the other necessary components to setting up the house.

- Pray for continued recovery for my friend who had surgery. It is hard and frustrating when it takes longer than expected to recover. Pray she would have a good mindset.

Ongoing Prayer Requests

- That God will revive the hearts of the staff and students this year, that we would passionately follow after Him.

- That our transition to hybrid learning would go smoothly. Pray for the staff and students as we adjust and continue to process the residual effects of the last 20 months of being online.
- That God will bring the staff members that we need for the next school year.

MISSIONARY UPDATES

DARWIN & KAREN STOESZ - JAPAN



March 20, 2022

Ministry Update Budgets and FRC's

Darwin is busy in the business office of SEND International Japan as we are getting close to the end of the budget which goes from April 1 to March 31. Financial Requirement Charts (FRCs) need to be updated for each missionary. Borders are opening to new missionaries with the proper paperwork so that means that there is additional work for Darwin who is also serving as housing and guesthouse manager. Pray for the transition to new leaders as Darwin prepares to leave the position of business manager after 8+ years of taking care of these responsibilities. We ask you for your prayers as we explore different opportunities for ministry with SEND International in our next term.

7.3 Magnitude Earthquake March 16, 2022 By Darwin

We had all gone to bed on Wednesday, March 16th when Karen woke me up at 11:36 p.m. and said we were having an earthquake. We got out of bed

and soon we heard Clara running into our room. We walked downstairs as we continued to feel the ground below us move. We turned on the TV to see that it was a 7.3 earthquake in almost the same place that Japan experienced the 9.0 earthquake on March 11, 2011. Karen and Clara were able to go back to bed right away, but it took me a little longer to relax enough to go back to bed. We checked in with SEND International Japan and were glad that everyone was accounted for okay.

We experienced no damage, and nothing fell off our shelves, but we heard of missionaries that had stuff fall off their shelves and sadly the news reported 4 deaths and injuring over 100 others. Thank you for your prayers for our safety and for the safety of those around us.

Sunday, March 20 begins the launch of 40 Days of Prayer for Ukraine, Russia, Europe, and the World

If you want to learn more about how you can be involved check out: <https://send.org/pray/ukraine-updates>

Home Service 2022-2023 – Tickets have been purchased for June 23

We have tickets for June 23 to return to the USA this summer. We plan on living in Elbing, Kansas from August 1, 2022, to June 2023. Pray for our plans for home service regarding transportation, scheduling, packing up our house here in Japan after 8 years in the same house, etc.

Family Update

Anna is doing well in her second semester at John Brown University. Clara just returned from Kyoto where she enjoyed spending time on the 8th grade field trip where they saw many historical places in the area. Clara is on the CAJ Middle School basketball team. Clara cleans the SEND Japan office every other week. Karen is taking another class with Moody Bible Institute called, “Discipline in Spiritual Formation “. She also really enjoys feeding the many birds that are coming to our backyard. Darwin enjoys going to the gym where he gets to greet everyone there and tries to make conversation.

Prayer / Schedule Update

Our tentative schedule so far is as follows. Of course, all dates are subject to change. Please pray for us especially for these events:

Mar 21-25 Anna JBU Spring Break in Whitewater, Kansas

Mar 21 Darwin has lunch with Kanazawa San and Tsuneizumi San

Mar 22 Darwin has Japanese class at the City Hall with Kazama-sensei

Mar 23 Darwin helps a new missionary open a Post Office bank account
Mar 26 – Apr 2 Stoesz Family trip to Yamanaka Chalet during CAJ Spring Break
Mar 30 Darwin gives a business report to Japan Council
Apr 1-2 SEND men work trip at Yamanaka Chalet
Apr 5 New water heater gets installed at SEND owned housing called SHASTA House E
Apr 5 Karen has CAJ new board member training
Apr 8 SEND Business Office meeting
Apr 16 Anniversary of our first date between Darwin and Karen
Apr 25-28 Darwin goes to Yamanaka for a retreat called “Still Waters: A Retreat for Physical & Spiritual Refreshment”
Apr 27 Darwin gives a business report to Japan Council
May 2-5 Anna has Final Exams at JBU
May 6 Anna last day at JBU for the year
May 8 Darwin gives blood with Japanese Red Cross
May 16-17 Karen Final CAJ board meetings
May 23-24 Anna flies to Japan
June 10 Clara last day of CAJ
June 11-14 Stoesz family at Yamanaka Chalet
June 23 Stoesz Family flies to USA to begin Home Service for one year
June 27 Darwin pick up vehicle with Righteous Rides
Jul 10 Darwin anniversary to join SEND International in 1997
July 10-16 Stoesz family at Fairhaven Ministries in Roan Mountain TN
Jul 24-29 SEND International Conference in Farmington MI called “Reconnect”
Aug 1 Move to Elbing, KS to a missionary home called “The Berean Mansion” on the campus of Berean Academy where Clara will attend

Please pray:

1. Pray that Darwin’s teacher Mr. Tsuneizumi and Karen’s friend Yuko-san would put their faith in Christ.
2. Pray for wisdom for decisions that need to be made in the SEND Japan office and at Christian Academy in Japan.
3. Praise that CAJ was able to hire a new Head of School who will start in August.
4. Pray for Anna and Clara that they would have continued growing

relationships with Jesus.

5. Pray for Anna at John Brown University and studies kinesiology.

6. Pray for Clara at Christian Academy in Japan that she would seek God and make good friends.

Thank you for your continued partnership in our ministry.

Thank you so much for your prayers, financial support, and encouragement so that we can stay here in Japan.

Sincerely, Darwin & Karen & Anna (18) & Clara (14) Stoesz

PAUL & JANET HARKNESS - AWANA



March 16, 2022

Greetings,

We appreciate your prayers and concerns.

Ministry - Pray as we continue to reach out to churches to have conversations about the importance of Child Discipleship. Pray that we can make connections and have conversations. Pray these conversations will lead churches into deeper and intentional ministry to children.

Family - This past weekend we had the pleasure of celebrating the 13th birthday of our grandson, Ezekiel, down in Mansfield, Missouri. We also had the privilege of meeting our great-granddaughter, MarLeigh, for the first time!

This coming weekend we head to Iowa for the 4th birthday of our granddaughter, Ashbel.

Health - Continuing to feel great!

Paul Harkness, Awana Missionary, Serving Nebraska, SE Wyoming, Southern South Dakota and SW Minnesota

SHAN REED - JAPAN



March 14, 2022

Hello Friends,

Journeying through this season leading up to the death and resurrection of our Savior I have been pondering a phrase describing this time as a season of bright-sadness. We look forward with hope to the resurrection of Jesus, however, to get there we must walk through the season of sadness as he is rejected, beaten and crucified. As I walk the path of grief, I am reminded to continue holding life in the tension it brings, sorrow and joy, pain and pleasure, death and life. I wonder how you might be experiencing these and other tensions in your own walk.

Here are a few ways you can be lifting us up in prayer this month:

*Please pray for the members and regular attenders of Komyo Christian Church as we have not been able to meet for several weeks because of another quasi state of emergency.

*Pray for the leaders at Komyo Christian Church, for wisdom and discernment.

*Pray for Komyo Christian Church as the Ewing family transitions to church planting preparation, home assignment, and then church planting upon return to Japan.

*March 19th will be our next YEAH! youth gathering, and March 28th will be our spring JBC MIX Youth online gathering. We had really hoped we could have our spring gathering in person this year, but we had to move it back to online. Pray for the students to make good connections with each other and to draw closer to Jesus even in an online format.

(YEAH! is the Komyo Church/Kongo Church monthly youth gathering. MIX Youth is the Japan Baptist Conference youth gathering with events quarterly for all of the churches in the denomination.) *Praise God that we have been able to resume our English classes and Bible studies in person. Please pray with us for the students to experience the love of Jesus.

Thank you for the way you participate in the spread of the gospel in Japan through your prayers for us here.

“We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God’s people.”

Colossians 1:3-4

Soli Deo Gloria, Shan in Japan

“Even the saddest things can become, once we have made peace with them, a source of wisdom and strength for the journey that still lies ahead.”

-Fredrick Buechner

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To partner with us by your donations:

Go to <https://www.awana.org/missionary/harkness/>

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How To Give to North American Baptist Missionaries:

Step 1: Go to the NAB's new missions webpage **nabonmission.org**.

Step 2: Click on the “**missionaries**” label.

Step 3: Click on the national missionary to whom you would like to designate your support.

Step 4: Click on the “**give to..**” button on the national workers page.

Step 5: **Fill out the form.** All gifts given through the NAB are tax deductible.

**BRANDON VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH
PRESENTING A CHANGELESS CHRIST FOR A CHANGING WORLD**