



# BRANDON VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

March 2022

Editor Janelle Daum

Volume 19, Issue 11



“Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, ‘If you bring me home again to fight against the Ammonites, and the Lord gives them over to me, I will be your head.’”  
Judges 11:9

Over the last few months I have been studying what the Scriptures mean when they talk about the life of faith. I have shared some of that study with you as I have talked about different men and women of faith found in the book of Judges. It has been a fascinating devotional study.

Someone once told me that the greatest measure of spiritual maturity is how we deal with situations where we have faced injustice or harm to our reputation. Do we respond in kind, or do we respond in grace? 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 faith we will respond differently than those who have no faith.

For the next few devotional messages I am going to focus on Jephthah in Judges 11. He teaches us that God has established a high moral ground, and He expects us to walk on that higher ground. The first characteristic of that higher faith ground that we learn from Jephthah is forgiveness.

The Associated Press carried a story from Los Angeles that showed how unforgiving a crowd can be. An angry crowd of about 100 church people chased a gunman who fired a shot inside their church. They cornered him a few blocks away and threw rocks and bricks at him until the police arrived. Police rescued the suspect just as the mob had gotten the man to the ground and had begun to administer “a little street justice to the man’s head and shoulders.” The man sustained slight head injuries. He was booked on charges of attempted murder. What’s interesting is that the police originally declined to identify him because they feared further retaliation from the church people. They didn’t trust the crowd in a church to forgive.

That reminds us that forgiveness is not natural. It’s a characteristic that has to be developed. It’s part of the higher ground that men and women of faith need to be walking on.

Jephthah was born into a mixed marriage situation that caused some huge problems for him. Not only was he just a half-brother to Gilead’s

other sons, he also had to bear the stigma of being the son of a prostitute.

As a half-brother Jephthah had definite rights. He had every right to expect to receive a portion of his father's inheritance. Legally he could demand it. But his brothers didn't see it that way. Instead, they drove him out of the house so that he wouldn't receive anything. It was injustice at its worst.

Jephthah's reaction is instructive and tells us a lot about his character. In v.1 Jephthah is described as being a mighty warrior. He was one of the strongest, fastest and most intelligent fighting men of his day. Few men were his equal. As a mighty warrior Jephthah could have easily taken his part of the inheritance by force. He didn't do that. Rather than cause trouble he left. He had been treated unjustly and with contempt, but he refused to react in kind.

It wasn't long before he was faced with the need to forgive his people for the wrong done to him. He moved to the city of Tob and gathered around himself a group of good-for-nothing outcasts as his allies. They then went out on raids against the Ammonites who were oppressing Israel at the time.

As the Ammonite oppression grew and war became imminent, the elders of Gilead turned to the only mighty warrior they knew. It was apparent that no one in Gilead was willing to stand against the Ammonite invaders, even though the reward was great. According to Judges 11:8, in the offer made to Jephthah, the elders of Gilead were prepared to agree that whoever would lead them in the battle against the Ammonites would be declared to be the leader of Gilead. Since no one else could be found who would do it they made the offer to

Jephthah, the outcast son of a prostitute.

What had been done to Jephthah by his brothers was both morally and ethically wrong. The elders of Gilead had done nothing to stop it. In verse 7 Jephthah first lets them know that they are showing a lot of nerve coming to him for help now. Verse 8 stands as a statement of contrition from the elders, “And the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, ‘That is why we have turned to you now, that you may go with us and fight against the Ammonites and be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.’” They were finally willing to admit they had done wrong and in their fear they turned to the only man they knew who could help them.

Jephthah relents, forgives them and agrees to help. In v.9 he tells the elders, “If you bring me home to fight against the Ammonites, and the Lord gives them over to me, I will be your head.” He was agreeing to forgive, and as a result he was moving from being an outcast to being the head over all of Gilead. The deal is sealed with a solemn vow in v.10, “The Lord will be witness between us...” Verse 11 tells us that the people of Gilead agreed to the vow and Jephthah was accepted as the leader of all Gilead.

A lesser man would have refused to help, no matter what the promised reward might have been. Jephthah was a man who displayed God’s character and grace. He walked on the high moral ground that God had established for men and women of faith. He had been treated wrongly, but he forgave. When they needed him he stepped up to the plate and served them. That forgiveness is an important part of the character of a person who lives by faith.

Forgiveness doesn’t say anything about the people being forgiven. It

speaks volumes about the heart and character of the one doing the forgiving. We don't forgive because people deserve to be forgiven. We forgive because it's an important facet of the character of God that He is developing within us.

Is there anyone in your life that you have refused to forgive? They may have hurt you deeply and done terrible things to you. Don't forgive because the other person deserves it. Forgive them because you deserve the freedom that forgiveness brings to your heart. Forgive them because that is what God has done for you. Forgive them because God has called you to walk according to His high moral standards. That forgiveness is an important part of the character of men and women of faith.

Blessings,  
Pastor Randy

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **WORSHIP TEAM REPORT**

Worship Team met January 23rd. Because the Christmas Carol Hymn sing/soup supper was so well attended we have decided to have the Hymn Sing be more theme-based and incorporate a meal. The next Hymn Sing will be held on Good Friday, April 15th followed by a potluck meal. More details to follow.

We have been discussing replacing the pulpit and communion table and have decided to go with "re-purposing" the current furniture to update it and make it more closely match the new chairs and table on the stage that were donated a while ago.

Worship Team members: Dixie, Matt, Erica, Hailey, and Jan

# **UPCOMING EVENTS FOR MARCH AND BEYOND**

## **EVENTS CALENDAR 2022:**

### **Sunday's**

**9:30 a.m.** Worship Service

**10:30 a.m.** Fellowship

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

**March 6, 11:30 a.m.** Sunday School Social, Lunch will be provided

### **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, March 13,** Daylight Savings Time Starts

**Sunday, March 20,** Newsletter Articles are Due

## **MISSIONARY OF THE MONTH**



### **Shan Reed**

Shan is serving the North American Baptist Conference in Osaka Fu, Japan, seeking to evangelize and minister through a church plant in Izumi, Osaka, and Komyo Christian Church.

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## MISSIONARY UPDATES

### **RICK & DEBBI BARDIN - CAMEROON**



FEBRUARY 2022  
ON THE ROAD AGAIN

#### **Prayer**

- Pray that the visa for the pathologist scheduled to go to Mbingo February 15 is granted in time.
- Pray for the quick and safe arrival of the team coming to install the new, automated telepathology system and the training of the Pathology Department staff by the installation team.
- Pray that while Debbie is on furlough the ministry of printing scripture cards monthly for patients continues well in her absence.
- Pray patients coming to our hospital will continue experiencing the love of Christ through the staff they encounter.

#### **Praises**

- Praise the Lord for the completed hydroelectric/oxygen project that is now providing uninterrupted, stable power to the hospital and

piped-in oxygen for all wards, ICU, and OR!! A dedication service took place on February 6. The NAB leadership team and Pastor Paul Nather from Century Baptist Church traveled to Cameroon for this. We want to sincerely thank the NAB and all those who contributed financially to make the hydroelectric project a reality!!

For the word of the Lord holds true and we can trust everything he does.

He loves whatever is just and good; the unfailing love of the Lord fills the earth.

**PSALM 33:4 - 5 (NLT)**

We arrived in the USA from Cameroon on January 14 and will be here until mid-June. Nashville First Baptist Church has made their mission house available to us, and we are very grateful!! We have enjoyed some time in Tennessee with our son and his family (including four grandsons) on the weekends. We are now in Florida to spend time with our daughter and her family (including a granddaughter and grandson). After that, we will be mostly on the road, reporting to 19 of our supporting churches over the next four months. These are scattered from Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Iowa to California. We plan also to attend a 10-day CME conference in April and a 10-day conference being held by the NAB in May. We expect to return to Cameroon on June 15.

While we are away, the pathology service is being provided via telepathology. This is currently being done using the manual slide scanning system that was used during our last furlough. This is possible because of the generosity of numerous stateside pathologists who are reading the cases. We are very happy to report that a new, automated slide scanner has also been purchased thanks to the matching fund sponsored by Southwestern Medical Clinic Foundation in 2021. The scanner is now on site in Mbingo awaiting an installation team to arrive from South Africa. This will greatly expand our capacity for

telepathology. We are so grateful and thank any and all of you who contributed to this! In addition, a volunteer pathologist is scheduled to actually go to Mbingo in mid-February to stay for six weeks! We thank God for blessing us though so many wonderful people!

In His Matchless Love,  
Rick & Debbie Bardin

## **DARWIN & KAREN STOESZ - JAPAN**



February 23, 2022

### **Manna – What is it?**

We read in Exodus 16:31 about how God provided food for the Israelites. The food that God provided was so strange to the Israelites that they literally called it “What is it” or Manna. When we first heard about a disease that was spreading throughout the world and then turn into a pandemic, we heard different terms for the disease because no one knew what it was. Eventually it became known as Covid. “What is it?” has affected different people in different ways. Many tragic stories have come from the pandemic that could be termed “What is it?”.

“What is it?” has provided new ways of doing ministry for missionaries in Japan. For the Stoesz family in Japan it meant that Anna did not come home for Christmas as it was quite difficult to travel at that time. It has also meant that Darwin worked from home for 68 days in 2021.

“What is it?” has made traveling more challenging. One new way that we can help missionaries in Japan is by providing transportation for missionaries in quarantine. Sometimes that means driving their car to the airport and leaving it for them to take home, or it means picking up a couple who got into Japan on a humanitarian visa to render support to their daughter who has a very young boy – who happens to be their first grandchild.

“What is it?” created vacancies in most of the five apartments that SEND International Japan calls the SEND Japan guesthouse. Darwin used that opportunity to refresh many of the guesthouses and stairwell from first floor to fourth floor with fresh paint, new wallpaper, and next generation LED lights that not only save electricity, but easier to maintain. We also were able to replace old water heaters. The advantage of doing the updating now was that the guesthouse was mostly empty. God provided willing workers from a local ministry and an English-speaking Japanese pastor who had the expertise to help us.

“What is it?” made the Christian school that we partner with called Christian Academy in Japan to remove tables and chairs to make space so that the children could keep their distance. SEND International could provide storage for the tables and chairs in our warehouse as they had insufficient space to store these items and they did not want to throw them away as they knew they would need them again.

## **SEND Ladies Retreat Report**

### **By Karen**

A group of thirteen SEND Japan ladies met for a time of relaxation, rest, and reflection for our annual ladies' retreat February 3-6. The theme of our retreat was God's Grace with the theme verse of 1 Peter 5:10. "And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you" (ESV).

These past two years have been challenging to each of us in various ways and we were able to reflect on God's grace given to each of us during our difficult circumstances. As we shared in small groups God's grace became obvious in how he answered many prayers, brought healing to physical illnesses, brought spiritual growth to new Believers, how he gives comfort to those who are mourning, direction to those who are planning for the future, and rest for the weary.

One SEND sister shared how she is now more excited about future ministry because she shared her story with her group, and they pointed out God's grace to her and her family in moving them to a new place of service. Where there was once only disappointment, there was now excitement. For me, sharing my prayers for Anna as we prepared to take her to college, and how God has faithfully answered those prayers, resulted in bolstering my spirits and continues to provide comfort even as we remain separated by time and distance. God does hear and answer prayer according to his will and good pleasure.

The SEND Japan ladies retreat was a special time of enjoying fellowship and fun with sisters in Christ.

### **Home Service 2022-2023**

Our home service is scheduled every four years and this June 2022 is when our home service is scheduled. We plan on living in Elbing, Kansas from June 2022 to June 2023. Anna will continue to

study at John Brown University, which is about four hours away. Pray for our plans for home service regarding transportation, packing up our house here in Japan after 8 years in the same house, etc. We ask you for your prayers as we explore different opportunities for ministry with SEND International in our next term.

### **Thank You!**

We often think of you, our supporters in prayer and finances. You have sacrificed money from your hard-earned salary to join in what God has invited us to do here in Japan. Pray that we will continue to serve faithfully, for Jesus is the Lamb and he is Lord of lords and King of kings!

### **Family Update**

Anna is doing well in her second semester at John Brown University. Clara finished soccer season and hopes to join basketball which is in the Spring at CAJ. Karen continues to really enjoy 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. Unfortunately, Darwin had to cancel his annual Super Bowl party as it was not on TV.

### **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:

Feb 24 Darwin gives a business report to Japan Council

Feb 25 Due date that missionaries need to approve an important financial document and then I need to double check the numbers.

Feb 27 Karen is planning a wedding reception for a SEND couple

Mar 15 Karen CAJ board meeting

Mar 17-18 Clara takes an overnight trip with the CAJ 8th grade to Kyoto

Mar 21-25 Anna JBU Spring Break

Mar 26 – Apr 2 Stoesz Family trip to Yamanaka Chalet

Mar 30 Darwin gives a business report to Japan Council  
Apr 1-2 SEND men work trip at Yamanaka Chalet  
Apr 16 Anniversary of our first date between Darwin and Karen  
Apr 27 Darwin gives a business report to Japan Council  
May 6 Anna last day at JBU  
May 16-17 Karen Final CAJ board meetings  
June 10 Clara last day of CAJ  
June 16 Stoesz USA Home Service begins

**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

## SHAN REED - JAPAN



FEBRUARY 2022  
SHAN IN JAPAN

### **Praises**

- Praise the Lord for wonderful times of worship and fellowship celebrating Jesus' birth.
- Praise God for YEAH! – our youth gathering at Komyo Christian Church
- Praise God for English conversation students.
- Praise the Lord for continuing to strengthen us as we learn to live rooted and built up in him.

### **Prayer**

- Pray for each one at Komyo Christian Church to continue to grow and learn to live in Jesus.
- Pray for our English conversation students to experience God's love as they come to Komyo Church for classes.
- Pray for the youth of Komyo and Kongo churches to learn to live rooted and built up in Christ.

• Pray for us as NAB missionaries and for Komyo Christian Church as there will be some significant transitions in the coming months.

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

### **COLOSSIANS 2:6 - 7 (NIV)**

Christmas is a wonderful time of year, not only because of the lights and gatherings but also because it is one of the best times to share about the love of God our Father and the birth of our Savior Jesus. Even with all the challenges of a global pandemic, the joy of Christmas still shines in our hearts. I am thankful for the many ways I was able to share that joy with friends, with students, and with the youth.

You may remember we started a youth group at Komyo Christian Church in 2020, along with students from our sister church, Kongo Bible Church. We gave it the name YEAH! since the first initial of the first four members spells 'yeah.' We enjoy our monthly gatherings, where we play games, sing, study God's Word, and, of course, have snack time. For our Christmas gathering, we decided to do something different and made a gateau chocolate cake. I brought the ingredients, and the students worked together to make the cake. It was delicious!

I was thrilled when the three students from Komyo Church were able to join our Christmas Eve service and were willing to participate. The two younger ones greeted everyone and handed out candles, while Elijah and I played the prelude on our clarinets. Then the three of them led the Advent reading and prayer.

Please pray with us as these young people learn to live rooted and built up in their Savior Jesus Christ, that they will be strengthened in their faith, and that they will overflow with thanksgiving.

Thank you for your prayers for our Christmas Eve service. One person attended for the first time. There were several people we

had not seen for a long time. Also, there were several who attended from our sister church, Kongo Bible Church. Because the space is so large, we also enjoyed singing out loud together. What a privilege it is to meet together for praise and fellowship.

Pray with us for Komyo Christian Church as we learn to walk with Jesus, being rooted and built up in him as we are strengthened in our faith and overflow with thanksgiving.

One of my English conversation classes had the opportunity to hear the true meaning of Christmas twice in December. There are four members in the class, two are Christians and the other two are not yet; however, they both have open hearts. One of the Christian students is the wife of the pastor from Kongo Bible Church. They invited us for their Christmas tea time, where we enjoyed fellowship and heard the Christmas story, as well as the story of the carol "Silent Night."

The following week, we had a potluck at my apartment, where we also decorated cookies. Before we started, I shared the Christmas story in simple English while the ladies translated it into Japanese for themselves.

Please pray with me for these students and the others at Komyo Church to hear Jesus calling them to himself.

As I look to the next few months, I look forward to how God is going to continue working in each of these areas of ministry, as well as in my own heart, as I continue to live my life rooted in Jesus, being built up as I walk with him daily. Thank you for your partnership in sharing the love of Christ where you are and through your support of me and the ministry here in Japan.

(FYI: Kongo Bible Church is the first place I ministered when I moved to Osaka in 2006. I am grateful for their prayers and support over the years.)

Shan Reed

## AMANDA BENSON - PHILIPPINES



February 1, 2022

**EXCITING CHANGES COMING!**

We have been moved to Alert Level 2 starting today!

And that means....

### **Face-to-face school!**

We will be starting face-to-face school on Monday, February 7. We will have two days of orientation, after which we will start our new schedule of hybrid learning. We will be running in two cohorts so that only about half of the students are on campus at a time. The other half will be joining on video call. Fridays will still be distance learning days.

As excited as we are about seeing our students, there are also a lot of stressors. Here are some you can be praying over:

- We have never taught hybrid, so we need to figure out how to do that before next week. This includes the physical set-up of the classroom (according to government guidelines), the management of in-person and hybrid at the same time, and knowing how to prep for a class that

is half in person and half online.

- Only fully vaccinated staff members can be in contact with students (as we are in the pilot program...this could change when the whole country is allowed to be in school again), so there are teachers who will still need to teach remotely. We also have a few staff who are overseas. So, that means we need warm bodies to supervise the classes. We have quite a few openings for these positions.
- Many of our students have never been to Faith Academy, or have never been in their current division (middle school/high school).
- Some of our students have barely seen other people for the last 22 months.
- Many students are still overseas. Praise the Lord the Philippines is opening the borders to fully vaccinated tourists starting this month, so some of them may come back. But many will finish the school year overseas.

We are so thankful God has provided us this opportunity. Almost all schools in the Philippines still are not able to meet in person.

Thank you for your prayers as we walk this new road!

Amanda

### **Praises**

- That we are at Alert Level 2 and can start face-to-face classes!
- I had Covid at the beginning of the month (along with most of our staff members and the rest of this country), but it was pretty mild, and I don't think I have any lingering symptoms.
- That God is preparing me for a new ministry for next year!

### **Prayer Requests**

- Pray for us as we transition to face-to-face school (see the list above!).
- Pray for wisdom as I process what my role will look like next year and as we begin to plan.
- Pray that God would provide the staff we need for Faith Academy

for next year. There are SO many needs for next year, particularly in middle school.

- The last week of this month, I'll be hiking Mt. Apo, the largest mountain in the Philippines, with some friends and coworkers. Pray for safe travels (it's on a different island), a safe hike, good fellowship, and a time of growth!

February 16, 2022

## **PowerUp! Prayer Update**

### **Praises**

- We had our first visit from the government to check how we are doing with blended learning. It was a really positive visit!
- The shift to blended learning has generally been smooth. It's been so amazing to have real kids sitting in our desks and getting to see them and interact with them on a daily basis!
- We are at the end of our first block of second semester! There have been a lot of changes, but God has been so good and carried us through it all.

### **Prayer Requests**

- Pray that I would be able to get my grading caught up over this break so that I can start the next block not behind.
- We are hoping that we can start having all kids every day next block. Pray that this would happen so that we can have more kids in person.
- Saturday a group of 14 of us are flying to Davao to hike Mt Apo, the tallest mountain in the Philippines. Pray that the details would all fall into place and that we would have a great hike and stay strong and healthy and have good fellowship.

### **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 Contact Info.**

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