



THE IRVIN FAMILY

AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST: UGANDA, AFRICA

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Luke 9:58 (KJV) And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.

As strangers and pilgrims in the earth, it would seem natural to lack home and roots. Yet we cease not to struggle with a personal desire for a place of our own; the Lord has blessed us with such a place here in Uganda. Kristin and I moved into an eighteen-foot travel trailer in May of 2018. We did so in preparation for deputation. We had specific goals to meet, and making this move did much to facilitate the accomplishments thereof. Then, February 2019 deputation began, and it proved to be an exciting and blessed venture, praise the Lord. In thirteen months, the Lord helped us raise our support, and we were soon on our way to our future homeland - Uganda, Africa.

Then again, Covid-19 was unleashed upon the world around us, leaving us once again in limbo. We had, at this point, given our travel trailer away and came to understand that foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but we had not where to lay our heads. But, the Lord blessed, as is his tendency. A lady in our home church offered us a place to stay as the world tried to make sense of the apparent pandemic. The very one that would only last for two weeks, then two more weeks, and now more than a year later, the saga continues, merited or not. Eventually, Uganda joined the list of countries that realized closing their borders indefinitely was a terrible economic plan that would cause more death, pain, and suffering than Covid-19.

Once open, Kristin and I went through the turmoil of world travel in our modern age. So modern it seems to have been set back several years. But, we are here, in our beloved Uganda. We also have a home, a place to lay our heads, and we thank our God for it all! It certainly was not our reality to live in the midst of a remodel, but such is necessary at this waypoint in our lives. As the dogs and chickens were removed (from inside the house, that is), deep cleaning took place, paint, tile, removal of excess growth in the yard, we cannot help but smile and praise God as we realize what the Lord has given us. Even as strangers and pilgrims, it is nice to have a familiar place for my family.



While managing the army of skilled workers who labor alongside us to get our home in order, we have had many great opportunities to engage in evangelism and cultural appropriation (please don't tell the US-based Social Justice Warriors). Remodeling our home has helped us to learn much about Ugandan culture. We have met many people as we wander around Masaka Town, learning what is available to us and who the people are that have worked to produce such goods as we need. Furthermore, we have been provided many wonderful opportunities to testify of the Lord Jesus Christ. One such opportunity availed itself to us as I took my wife shopping for essential household goods. As we passed by a local Mosque, a Ugandan Muslim quickly took an interest in us. He invited us to his friend's shop immediately next to the Mosque. There we engaged in a friendly but spirited spiritual battle.

Their first attempt at winning my wife and me to Islam's false religion came by way of familiarity. They wanted us to know that Islam and Christianity were essentially the same. I was overjoyed to hear this, so I responded by telling them how excited I was they have trusted in the death, burial, and resurrection of God's Son. They then informed me that is not what they meant; the Quran, according to them, has the same stories as the Injil (New Testament). So I asked them if Mary gave birth to Christ under a tree or in a manger? Their answer (I already knew the answer) was that she gave birth to Christ under a tree. So I read to them the birth of Christ from the Injil and noted it was very different from the Quran's depiction of his birth. They then informed me the New Testament has been corrupted and that the Quran is the true word of Allah. To which I told them we all then have a severe problem. God promised, in the Bible, he would himself preserve and protect his own word. If God failed to do that in the Bible, that same failure, by an apparently weak god, would be a reality in the Quran as well. So either God kept all his word, or no book available to us is the trustworthy word of God.

Our conversation was respectful, but we each firmly challenged one another's beliefs. It was the type of confrontational but respectful conversation Christians should be regularly engaged in. We exchanged numbers, and I plan to stop by and see them regularly. Please pray for these men. I want to end this letter by requesting you pray for a young man named Jared. He is a Roman Catholic who comes from a long and dedicated line of Roman Catholics. We met him out soul-winning in the streets, where we engage people in one-on-one conversation. He happened to pass by at the right time. It became abundantly clear this man is searching for truth. After nearly two hours of discussion, he was able to clearly see the differences between his family's dead religion in light of the word of God. He noted that he believed he was going to hell and that his religion could not help him. Yet, it did provide a temporary feeling of accomplishment toward godliness.



We met with Jared a week later in his home; it is rare to see a man so close to salvation. But he refuses to take that final step in rejecting his dead religion and trusting in the Son of God. Jared's brother is a Roman Catholic priest, and his mother is dedicated to the Catholic Church. Jared understands that making this decision has serious repercussions for him. His family will likely shun him. Catholicism's hold here is strong. I once went to a funeral here in Uganda. A baby had died in the night; the burial was the next day. The family was Catholic but had not been faithful to their religion. As such, the Catholic priest came, and in front of everyone present, announced he refuses to perform the last rites for the baby because the father had not attended to his religious duties. As an onlooker, it was a frustrating event to witness. I requested an audience with the family; it was granted; I explained to them the priest was a liar who intended to profit off their child's death. It was curious to me the lack of faithfulness on behalf of the father could be reconciled if this poor family brought a certain sum of money to the priest. Nothing like holding a child hostage in eternal hell, that is, unless a certain temporal sum of money is produced. This gives you some background into the realities of what Jared will face if he trusts the Lord. The word is nigh him, but what follows causes him to hesitate.

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