



Trip Report – Nasir November 2008

written by David Humphrey

On November 1st, the Nasir team took off from Nashville and Houston ready to meet each other face-to-face for the first time in the Amsterdam airport. The team of seven included myself; my wife Danyel, a preschool teacher; Kate, a nurse; Jengmer, Moses Project missionary; Barbara, Aid Sudan's Director of Education; Marcia, a nurse who spent her childhood in Sudan and Ernie, a pastor at a Sudanese church in Tennessee. As we watched God call out such a unique team with diverse backgrounds, we knew God had something amazing planned, but we could have never imagined the joys we would experience serving together to the Nuer people in Nasir, Sudan.

Upon our arrival to Uganda together with the teams headed for Mvolo/Kulu and Biong, we were greeted by the smiling faces and warm hugs of Sudan Country Director Kerry Henderson and his family, who led us to their home where we would stay before journeying into Sudan. They hosted us with true Southern hospitality as we were wowed by Neltia's cooking at every meal.

After a brief night's rest, Jengmer arose the next morning to fly into Sudan with our cargo and prepare the way for the team's arrival. On Tuesday, the remaining six of us boarded the small plane for the long flight to Nasir. There was a great sense of anticipation for all of us, but none compared to Marcia's. As a child, her parents served the Nuer people as medical missionaries and now after 44 years she was returning to her childhood home. Having been forced to leave the people they loved in 1964 by the Northern government, Marcia had never dreamed she'd have the opportunity to return, and in just a few hours, she would be the first of her family members to set foot on the ground in Nasir again.

As the plane skidded down the dirt airstrip through the middle of town, Ernie was the first to look out the window to notice the celebration staged to welcome our arrival. We exited the plane to hundreds of smiling faces,



Team welcomed at the airstrip

young and old, dressed in bright colors greeting us with handshakes, singing, drumming and marching as they waved their flags in the air. The biggest smile in the crowd came from Jengmer as he welcomed his first short-term team to Nasir to work among his people. The team felt like we had arrived in heaven to the rejoicing of a great cloud of witnesses as we were taken to the church where the celebration would continue. There the church and community leaders officially welcomed us and especially thanked Marcia for returning to Nasir. She was again given the name Nyabole - her Nuer name when she lived among the people long ago. She was in awe as they honored her father for his tireless labor among them.



Discussing plans with village leaders

When the festivities were over, we were taken to Aid Sudan's first compound on the ground in Sudan - the place we called the Nasir Hilton. Jengmer and his friends' hard labor and many prayers had gone into this base of operations for our work in the area, and we would be the first to enjoy the accommodations. In the center of the compound was a large oval shaped hut encircled with screened in windows that had just been completed. I immediately began to envision Jengmer sharing

Chronological Bible stories with men and women in that

place built with such love and care. As we settled into our living quarters, we noticed that our spacious huts were beautifully decorated with traditional Nuer designs on the mud walls. It felt good to finally be on the ground and ready to serve.

As is custom, the first full day was spent meeting with local officials to share the goals for our time there and to present them with gifts. We were all warmly received, but none more than Nyabole. The deputy commissioner

recounted stories of how her father helped as a doctor and taught them English. Their gratefulness for his work was immeasurable, and they even offered Nyabole her family's old compound should she ever want to return to serve there. The commissioner told us that Jengmer and Nyabole were sons and daughters of Nasir and they welcomed us all to work freely. He went on to say that the **missionaries are not like the traders who come. He said the traders come to take, but the**



Classes begin at Nasir Bible School

missionaries come to give. After this meeting, we made our way through town to the compound where Marcia and her family served the Nuer, as the memories of her days there came flooding back.

On Thursday, we were all set to begin our two main areas of work. Barbara and the women would launch a five-day teacher training seminar while Jengmer and the men laid the groundwork for the foundation of the Nasir Bible School. After the team departed, Jengmer would remain behind to continue the work, so our short-term

goals were part of a long-term strategy for him to train men and women in stories from the Word of God.



Marcia at her family's old compound

For our first two days of training, church leaders from every church in the area were invited as we introduced the first two Chronological Bible stories, the Creation of the Spirit World and the Creation of the World. Jengmer led with confidence and the people hung onto his every word as he shared the stories in their native language and led them in discussing the attributes of God as seen in the stories. After teaching concluded for the day, we shared with the participants the commitment that would be involved in enrolling as a student in the school. Students would commit to attend Nasir Bible School three days a week for five hours a day over the next 15 weeks to learn 46 stories from God's Word. At the conclusion of each day, each student would



Ernie instructs students at the Bible school

have to tell the story they learned to the rest of the group and then everyone would enjoy a hot meal together. Ernie shared pastoral wisdom, encouraging them from 2 Timothy 2:15-16 to work hard to learn these stories and to **“correctly handle the word of truth.”** Our long-term goal is to continue teaching over the next two years so that each would know an oral Bible of over one hundred stories.

On Sunday, Marcia and Ernie worshiped in Nasir with the local church as Ernie shared God's Word and Marcia brought a word of testimony. When her father, Dr. Gordon, first came to Nasir in the 50's, he had been given a bull and was nicknamed after the color of that bull. When the church members gathered for worship that day, they remembered her father by bringing a cow of that color in his honor.

The rest of the team took a boat ride up the river to Jengmer's home village of Torpuot. As we approached, the villagers were singing on the shore to welcome us. We left the boat and were led to the church across a "red carpet" of multicolored tarps, stopped only by the women who washed our feet and hands and touched our foreheads with water to bless us. We gathered outside to worship with the villagers as choirs from all over the area sang His praises. When one of the village elders stood to greet our team, he said that **there were three needs in the village of Torpuot: a water well, a school and a clinic.** It was a miracle of God that they were surviving because the only water they had to drink came from the muddy river. He talked about the only school in the large village



Jengmer teaching at the Bible school

- a small, tattered tent that is grossly insufficient. His statement of how desperately they need a clinic was exemplified when our team got in the boat to return to Nasir.



Barbara instructs a room full of eager teachers

As we loaded the boat, desperate parents of sick or wounded children begged us to take their children to town so they could receive some type of medical care. We loaded as many as we could take into the small boat and headed for Nasir, leaving so many needy people behind. As we thought about all of this need, we couldn't help but think of Aid Sudan's Village-to-Village program, where we address all three of these needs as God provides the needed funds.

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"Three days?" Barbara asked with incredulity. **"Yes," he replied. "Three days." That is how long one student walked to attend Aid Sudan's teacher training** - and he wasn't the only one who walked many days down rough roads in extreme heat to attend. It is hard to process - the hunger for knowledge; the desire to better the lives of the children in their villages; the willingness to go through such hardships to learn. And they came with such joy and excitement! Their journey was a privilege as each one had been chosen by Nasir's commissioner of education to advance their education.

31 determined, hardworking men and women from all over Nasir gathered to learn for two days in a large classroom at facilities owned by ADRA (Adventist Development Relief Agency) and three days in a small Baptist church mud hut. The training revolved around materials called Wilson Foundations, which were

developed to teach children (K-1) how to read and write. (Wilson generously donated many of their products, and the rest were bought with money given by supporters.) In addition to learning how to teach reading and writing, these materials helped the teachers improve their own English skills. The training also covered how children learn, readiness activities, classroom management, critical thinking and teaching math in ways to increase comprehension. At the end of the week, a ceremony was conducted to hand out their certificates and the team divided all the materials we brought, offering one set of materials to each payam. This felt like a drop in an ocean as this is the same as giving one small bag of materials to serve one entire county where schools are separated by hours and hours on foot. Nevertheless, they were thankful for what they had been given and said they would share what they had learned and received.



Kate assists the teachers



Danyel takes a break to play with the children

Kate, Danyel, and Marcia offered tremendous support to Barbara as they helped the teachers work in small groups, shared Chronological Bible stories and offered one-on-one help to the teachers. Drawing on their training as nurses, Kate and Marcia taught a section in health and hygiene drawing while Danyel also taught certain sections. God certainly hand-picked these precious women, as each one brought their own unique gifts to the teacher training.

When the sunrise lit up the sky over Nasir on Monday, we awoke eager to see how many church leaders would commit to study God's Word with Jengmer at the Nasir Bible School. Having predetermined that our maximum size would be 30 students, we prayed and waited to see who would make this commitment. We were amazed when 28 men and women enrolled for classes. When we asked if they understood the commitment they were making, their responses were inspirational. One said that **Nasir has never seen anything like this** as other missionaries come and go, but this training will continue after the team leaves. A

crippled woman named Mary who enrolled said that she **couldn't read and write so this was the best way for her to learn God's Word**. Another gentleman named John said that although his wife is pregnant and it's the time of year that he has to cultivate his crops, he will commit



Simon shares a story with crowd

himself to learn these stories and trust God to help him get his work done. Two single mothers enrolled and said they wanted to learn the stories to **lead their children well**. Others declared that **when the stories are in our hearts, no one can take them away**.



Marcia speaks with an elder

After Jengmer told the stories in Nuer, hands shot up when he asked for volunteers to retell the stories. One by one, they told the stories with great enthusiasm and minimal effort. The speed and accuracy with which they learned these stories from God's Word was breathtaking, but it's the long term impact that these stories will have on people across the area that drives us forward. It's amazing to think that Jengmer learned these stories in Houston, and they were now being multiplied almost thirty times to these students who would in turn share them with countless others. This is the beauty of the Moses Project: southern Sudanese being trained and sent to have an impact on their communities back in Sudan for the long term.

When it was time to say goodbye to our new friends in Nasir, we couldn't help but think about what it means to make a difference that lasts beyond you. In the 50's and 60's, Marcia's family, had labored in this field and the fruit of their labor was still evident today. The Aid Sudan team has also begun our labor of love in the Nasir area and we're excited about the long-term impact of the teacher training and the Nasir Bible School. When Paul addressed the church in I Corinthians 3, he reminded them that he planted the seed and another watered but **"God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor."** Thank you to all the Aid Sudan supporters who made this trip possible. May God bless and multiply the work of our hands.