

Finding beauty in the crazy

The other day I was coming out of the house and my eye caught this flash of bright blue on the dog's water bowl, I wondered what it was, I looked again and it seemed to be a beetle. I am used to seeing random insects, geckos, lizards etc here in Uganda but I had not seen this before. It was beautiful, quirky and unique, it was bright blue and white and there was so much detail on his little body, it was wonderful. Seeing this beetle really spoke to me about God who created me also created this little beetle, He paid attention to every detail and made him uniquely different. It shocked me as I really don't like insects as they creep me out but I was seeing so much beauty in something I would normally find so ugly and scary. This made me think about how God works, how he creates beautiful things out of things that seem like it should be impossible to create anything out of, let alone make anything beautiful out of it. However he does, he uses things that looks impossible and uses them for his good and makes them better than ever.



Beautiful beetle

I love that I live in Africa, it is an amazing adventure but it is hard, I don't always want to admit it is hard as many of the 'missionary books' I read talk about how wonderful it is and how they are now 'African' I used to find it difficult that I do not feel this way, yes I love Africa and I love Uganda but there is so much about it I find it difficult, so much of it that I am not used to even after living in Africa for nearly 5 years. There are parts I love and parts I struggle with immensely, there are things the West can learn from and there are things that need to change but this is the same in every culture. I have been learning recently that it is ok to find things difficult and not be completely in love with the place and how things are. I have not been brought up in an environment that has constant power and water cuts, where rules are not followed or enforced and corruption is upfront and blatant. So it is natural that these are the things that I struggle with. I am used to seeing and working with injustice through my job as a social worker but here it is different, there is so much more of it and lack of services and structures to support those facing the injustice which makes it much more difficult to fight. The unspoken rules of culture and life here are so different to what I am used to, women being second class citizens, men having more than one wife being normal, children going without education due to poverty, domestic violence and child abuse just being something that happens despite it being wrong, exploitation and witchcraft being part of the lifestyle, children as young as 7 years old living on the street, being chased by the police and exploited by older children. These are things we see as we work in our communities every day and sometimes it feels

overwhelming as despite there being systems in place, they often fail the people due to many different reasons.



Form of transportation in Uganda



Simple but beautiful way of cooking

Living here is not easy and I am learning that it is ok to say that but it is about our perspective and attitude of how we deal with this, which is not always easy either. I know that if I lived in England it does not necessarily mean things will be easy, there will still be difficulties, and they will just be different kinds of challenges. I have made a choice to follow Jesus, to peruse Him, to yield to Him, to help others draw closer to him and walking in that choice means challenges wherever I am in the world, there will still be sacrifice it will just look different. Jesus has called me to Africa to work in and through me and I want to be obedient and follow him and he gives me strength in those moments that feel dark and impossible even if it doesn't seem like it at the time. This helps me remember that God can make beautiful things out of anything, he can create beauty when there seems to be so much despair it seems impossible. Sometimes I just need reminding that just because things are hard it does not mean they are not good or good cannot come out of them.

Since being in Uganda God has been doing a work in me, he has challenged me to the core and his changing me from the inside out, making good things where there is no good to be found. He has challenged me more and more to have a new perspective, not to look at things through grey scale spectacles with blinkers attached them, giving me only a tunnel vision of just one way of looking at things but to replace them with God's lenses with a different view, a view that enables you to see things from a kingdom perspective. As I have continued with life here I have realised that this is an active choice we need to make each and every day as the easy option is to choose the grey scaled blinker spectacles it is much harder to choose to look at things from a kingdom perspective, when things are difficult and you can not understand why, it is hard to look at them differently and it takes courage, faith and trust in Jesus to see things differently, that there is some good in this mess. Every day I often get irritated with the amount of traffic, with people not following rules, causing accidents, not doing their job unless you give them extra money, having no water or power, I just want to grumble and complain about it instead of seeing things differently, looking for opportunity of how God can work through me, how I can be a blessing to people, how I can advocate to people. I have learnt here that a smile goes a long way, being friendly and overly kind can change many situations such as people shouting at you in traffic, police trying to get a bribe. All I have to do is

change my attitude and show Jesus in the situation but this is not as simple as it sounds and often I have to release all control of the situation and trust God to work in it but my attitude has to be one of faith and trust not complaining hopelessness. When I do this I start to see beauty, hope Jesus in this place and my faith strengthened and ready to take the next step.



Social Champion Training



Childlike beauty

This is the same with the work we do, despite what we are doing in the communities to see change there still seems to be so much hopelessness and darkness; children dying from malnutrition and child abuse, people being seriously hurt physically and emotionally by domestic violence. However Jesus has been reminding me it is not about what we are doing in our own efforts, it is what he is doing, we are his instruments but ultimately we have to trust his sovereignty in every situation even the ones that seem to be the darkest. Again Jesus reminds me to change my perspective and look at the beauty we can see now in this moment. Recently at Revelation Life we have been praying and worshiping in the communities we work in once a month, since doing this we have heard testimonies of people being healed, giving their lives to Jesus and broken from curses. We are standing against the darkness hanging over our communities through entrusting them to the Lord and interceding through worship and prayer, holding our swords held high and charging at that cloud of darkness and despair through carrying Jesus love, grace and mercy. We have started our social champion programme where we are training 12 community members in social work skills, to be able to go in the communities and make communities aware of things like child abuse and domestic violence creating a deeper awareness of what abuse is and what to do about it. Abuse is a massive dark cloud that hangs over our communities and feels impossible to combat but through equipping and releasing we are running at that cloud with our swords raised bring Jesus and his hope into it. Our family centre programme has just finished and five families have resettled in different parts of Uganda, hearing their stories during the graduation showed me the beauty God is making out of impossible situations. Nearly all of the families spoke about how they had no hope and were stuck in the impossible situations and since being on the programme they have gained new skills and are able to start businesses as well as changing their mind-set, in the way they view themselves and their ability to take control of their own lives. Looking at the celebrations and miracles, reignites my faith and hope and changes my perspective, seeing that God is breaking the cloud of oppression, despair and hopelessness.



Family Centre Graduation

On a Sunday I have been volunteering at Freedom Heroes which is church for boys who live on the street, it runs every Sunday and is part of Freedom Church which I am part of here in Kampala. Every time I attend my heart breaks for these boys, I feel so out of my comfort zone that I have to completely rely on the strength of Jesus but He is teaching me how to love these boys. I look at their situations and hear their stories and I am broken, how can this be right, children as young as 7, alone and fending for themselves on their streets, having to become tough to survive. Being part of something that shows these boys Love and more importantly the love of Jesus is honestly very humbling. I often hear their stories and feel sad and wonder if anything will change. Then I see the boys the worship during the service, not just singing, truly worshiping, looking completely in love with Jesus, then I hear from the boys who want to invite Jesus in their hearts and have the privilege of praying with them and continuing walking a journey with them, we hear from the boys who want to be reunited with their families and try to go home...it is not an easy road but God is doing something beautiful in these boys and their situations. When they are at the programme they seemed to be more relaxed, they seem free to be able to let their guard down and are free to be able to be a child again without having to think about survival even if it is just for a few hours. One of my favourite things to do is to wash the boys hands before we eat, these boys have to do everything for themselves, things they should not have to do as children, so having the privilege to be able to do something as simple as washing their hands is a real joy and I hope it shows some of the love I have for them and how the love of Jesus is even bigger for them. Again this gives me hope and restores my faith when the darkness creeps in.



Freedom Hero's boys getting baptised

I have become more and more involved in Freedom church which I love, they are passionate about connecting anyone to a life changing relationship with Jesus, since being a part of this church my passion for Jesus has been reignited, I realised that over the last few years on the mission field I had lost my passion for Jesus, my passion to show Jesus' love to others, my faith had become my companion instead of what drives and motivates me to fulfil what Jesus called us to do, to go and make disciples, over these last few months he has reminded me of this and reminded me that he has called me to the nations. I feel that Jesus is moving me on from Kampala and to be a part of Freedom Church and one of their church planting teams, I have sent more details about this in the email I sent along with this newsletter. If you did not get the email and want to know more please give me your email address and I'll give you more details.



Church Family from around the world

Jesus has been working in my life so much and has been showing me how he can even make beautiful things out of things I have messed up or damaged through my past mistakes. Jesus has been speaking straight into my insecurities and my fears, He has brought me on a journey were I

have to come face to face with my insecurities and my fear of rejection, he is showing me about where my worth and value lie and showing me how to operate out of being truly loved and accepted rather than a place of trying to find love, worth and acceptance from others, he is uprooting the roots that have buried themselves in things of the world such as the approval of people and planting them deeply in him and his love for me. It has been tough I have had to face times where things feel so difficult and messed up that I just want to come home, I am having to rely on God to provide me with everything I need finances, love, security instead of people as he is stripping away all the things I could rely on instead of him providing me with opportunity to rely on the only thing that will sustain and not fail me which is him! This tough but life changing and I can see him creating something new in and through me, creating something is not easy, it takes work and you have to start again, it is a process which takes time and commitment, I am willing to continue on this adventure as I know God only creates good things and I am prepared to go through the difficult times (even if I cry) to see God bring out the beauty both in and through me!