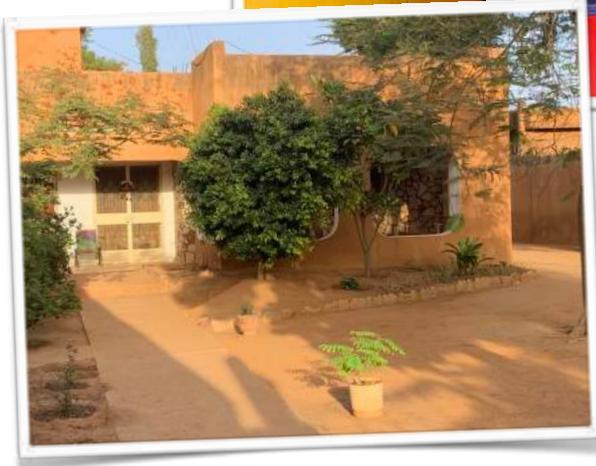


# Gleams in the Desert

April Zerma Team Prayer Letter



# **Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.**

## Romans 12:12

March began normally, full of ministry and activities. I took the church's kids club to a local park to celebrate the end of our Bible review. We had a lot of fun. They enjoyed the swings, trampoline, and bouncy houses; especially the one with the water slide. We ate dinner there and they brought home food to share with their families.

Phil helped lead a three day workshop on preaching for our Nigerien partners who lead churches and outreach groups. About fifteen men, from four different people groups, attended the training. It was encouraging to see them take some basic fundamentals and put them to practical use. Perhaps most helpful was learning to take a passage, determine what the main meaning is, and be able to put that in a simple phrase or sentence before building the sermon.

The Sustars, Seydous, and we enjoyed getting together to celebrate Phil, Ben, and Pastor Yacouba's March birthdays. We each brought dishes to share and enjoyed grilled steak, chicken, and fish. Cindy made German chocolate cake and ice cream for dessert. It was a joyful occasion celebrating these three men.

I was leading the three weekly kids clubs and preparing for leading a children's ministry training in April. Phil was teaching a New Testament overview at our church each week. He visited a remote village where he would like to do a well project. And then everything changed.

On March 19th, we received an email from our West African Medical Department. Since we were put in a higher risk category of having a severe case of Coronavirus if we contracted it, they were recommending us to self-quarantine for the next three weeks. The IMB had already been sending out information and recommendations. All of us can be so proud of the job the board has done at keeping us informed and looking out for the health and wellbeing of its missionaries. We had just completed a major shopping trip *that very morning* and we were prepared to begin our quarantine the next morning. So, the last half of March has seen us at home. We're honoring our medical department's request. We're demonstrating neighbor love by isolating ourselves. As I write this, Niamey is now under a 7pm to 6am curfew, no one is allowed in or out of the city for the next two weeks, the airport has closed, schools are closed, and no gatherings of 50 or more may take place. Niger has 34 cases of COVID-19 and 3 deaths.

What does our quarantine look like? (Our house is the top left photo above). I've been preparing future lessons and material for kids clubs. I continue to work on children's ministry training material for whenever the training may happen in the future. Phil has been staying in touch with our partners and believers via WhatsApp and telephone calls. He's working on consolidating the New Testament overview onto one sheet of paper that participants can use to help them remember what they've learned. We spend time reading the Bible and in prayer.

We watch movies or tv shows in the evening before bed or we play games. We stay in touch with our mothers and our children in the states. We enjoy the silly antics of our dog, Luna, who makes us laugh and who is beyond delighted at having us home constantly these past 11 days. We sit on our porch and talk. We walk around our yard. We gratefully receive

the love, support, and grocery deliveries, along with special treats and notes, from our missionary family. Please join us in praying for the following requests this month. Please remember to pray for our 55 in 5 people groups this month located at the end of our prayer requests. Our leadership has set a 5-year goal of engaging 55 unreached, unengaged people groups (UUPGs) with a population of over 100,000 people.

### **April Prayer Points**

With lockdown procedures in place across Niger, many people in the bush have limited access to food normally brought into local markets each week. Pray that God would provide in these areas.

Thanks for your prayers for "Bob" last month ( the former witch doctor who is now following Christ). He is doing much better. He asks for prayer for his wife, that she would trust in Jesus also.

We give thanks that our Nigerien partners had opportunity to share the gospel with several large groups in a number of villages this past month. Pray that those who heard and accepted Christ will grow in their new faith. Pray that those who listened but have put off believing would sense the urgency and need for repentance and trusting in Christ today.

Please pray that this pandemic would end soon. Pray for the good God will bring from it. Pray for us and for other missionaries around the world as we search for meaningful ways to be salt and light to our Nigerien brothers and sisters, friends, and neighbors.

Pray for Caroline as she works at a retirement community. She has been deemed essential personnel and continues to work. We're grateful for his provision for her. Pray for her to remain healthy as she takes all necessary precautions. Pray for Caleb as he is staying with a college

friend and his family for a couple of weeks. Pray for his continued good health. Pray for a job for him.

## **55 in 5**

Please pray for the **Fulbe Fula Jalon** of Mali. Pray for this nomadic people who wander in this difficult-to-reach region. Pray that they will hear God's voice and be led through the wilderness and into salvation.

Pray for the **Kutu** of Tanzania. Pray for God to bless those who are actively recording Scripture portions in the Kutu language. Ask Him to help Kutu believers to tell His story well, so that His truths will be made known.

The **Mango** people of southern Chad have no known Christian engagement among them. Pray for a Christian witness to be raised up to share the love of Jesus with the Mango people.

Pray for the **Muslims** of South Africa. Islam is dramatically growing in numbers and influence throughout South Africa. Pray that God will raise up the South African church with a desire to see Muslims in their community saved. Pray for those Muslims who come to faith and experience severe persecution from their family and community. Ask the Lord to give them strength to endure and boldness to proclaim the gospel in the midst of persecution.

Pray for the **Mwanga** people of Zambia. They have been exposed to Christianity for many years, but they continue to live in their traditional ways, practicing ancestor worship and ceremonies. The Mwanga are very religious but without Christ in their lives. Pray that believers living among the Mwanga will share the gospel boldly and in a culturally sensitive way.