

Hope's Promise Kenya Short Term Mission March 28-April 10

Part 3: Vision in the Valley



We blink away the haze of sun-blinded eyes. Shapes clarify in the confined one-room gloom. We sit close enough to feel each other breathe. Esther's mom stands sentry, gazing outward. Her weathered silhouette catches the light; she seems to see beyond narrow corridors of laundry flapping over open sewage ditches. Her daughter faces us. As a member of Lepta, a Mathare Worship Centre program that empowers youth in spiritual growth, education, leadership, and vision, Esther shyly but confidently describes her dream of opening a "knowledge center," a place where slum residents can access computers, books, and modern communication devices. No such facilities currently exist in Mathare, home to half a million people. Everything the family owns is packed into this shanty, and food is scarce at times. But Pastor Karau's affirmation banishes the vast gulf between current reality and vision. "Without knowledge," he proudly nods to her, "the people perish." It is asked of the three Lepta friends also crowded in with us if they will support Esther in her dream. They nod, like midwives ready to assist the birth. We grasp hands to beseech the God of the Universe to accomplish His will on earth, as it is in heaven. On my left is Pastor Karau, on my right Esther. Their lifeblood pulses through palms pressed into mine, throbbing, insistent. Hand-to-hand in prayer, hope will not be denied.



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Livingstone is eager to walk through Mathare Valley at my side. He stumbled into salvation in January 2011; somehow, he ended up in the same shack with Mama Karau on that fateful day. She asked if he was ready to follow Jesus. He nodded. She turned to Jacob, a teenage STM member about Livingstone's same age, and told him to pray with Livingstone to receive Christ. Jacob will never be the same, after witnessing the Kingdom of God infuse a rusted corrugated room.

American friends later heard about Livingstone's conversion and lack of funds to attend secondary school. The Karaus confirmed that if given the chance, education could change Livingstone's destiny; and so he was accepted to the Hope's Promise LEADS scholarship program.



Weaving around piles of trash and oozing holes in blue rubber flip-flops, Livingstone enthusiastically recollects giving a primary school presentation against drug use that inadvertently ended up on the evening news. He describes to me a personal dream sparked by this fortuitous event – to wage a professional campaign to persuade young people to fore-go the use of drugs. Normally quiet and shy, Livingstone describes his vision passionately and in detail.

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Perhaps that night when Esther and Livingstone tumbled into makeshift beds, listening to the murmur of family members' breathing crowded round and the rumbling of their own empty stomachs, they reflected on the days' encounters with people from half a world away. Maybe they felt acutely the gap between the dreams they shared and their daily existence. But I am confident that they fell asleep clinging to God, who they know without a doubt is really all that is worth having at the end of

a day.

Perhaps they slept richer than I will ever be.



Jacob and Livingstone, reunited a year after Livingstone came to faith in Christ.