

3 Haunting Stories You Can Help Change

ITMI

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“Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you.” – Isaiah 41:10

SOUTH SUDAN

FEAR ROSE INSIDE HIS CHEST as Bilal ducked under the door of his home - a mud hut where his family was squatting. At night, he still woke in a fearful sweat, remembering what happened the last time he and his brother had come home empty-handed.

It had been two days since Bilal ate. He'd happened upon a pair of girls walking on a neighborhood road. He had snatched a small cake from one's hands, then sprinted away. He had already managed to obtain a meal for his father that day, so it had been safe to quell his own overwhelming hunger on the spot.

This evening, though, they had not been so fortunate. The boys had scored a little food and were returning to present it to their father. In the gathering darkness, attackers surprised Bilal and his brother, and in a flash began pummeling their victims with fists and feet. As they rose from the dirt to head home, blood was pooling in Bilal's mouth and his brother could barely walk. The food they had been bringing back to their father gone, they headed home empty handed.

Although his face was throbbing unbearably, Bilal felt even more afraid of what might happen next.

A sigh of relief escaped his lips as he saw his father passed out, drunk, in the dirt. With any luck he'd stay that way until the boys could nurse their wounds and find some food.

These stories are fictional stories, a compilation derived from various real testimonies that provide insight into the lives of many in South Sudan. These stories are just a representation of what people face in South Sudan.

Some months prior, the family had been displaced from their village when raiding government soldiers assumed most were resistance fighters and attacked, brutally killing many civilians. Those who survived were forced to flee.

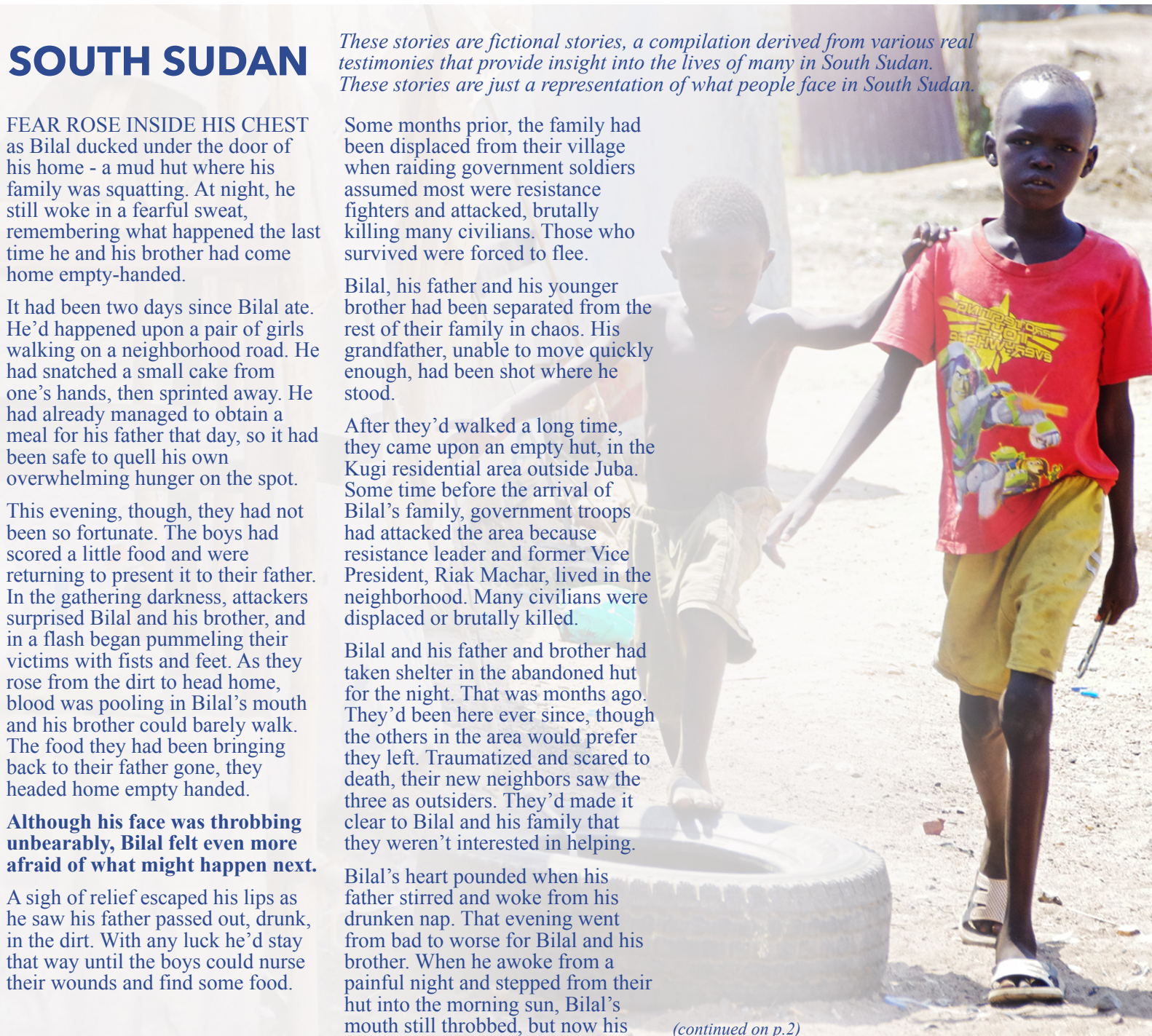
Bilal, his father and his younger brother had been separated from the rest of their family in chaos. His grandfather, unable to move quickly enough, had been shot where he stood.

After they'd walked a long time, they came upon an empty hut, in the Kugi residential area outside Juba. Some time before the arrival of Bilal's family, government troops had attacked the area because resistance leader and former Vice President, Riak Machar, lived in the neighborhood. Many civilians were displaced or brutally killed.

Bilal and his father and brother had taken shelter in the abandoned hut for the night. That was months ago. They'd been here ever since, though the others in the area would prefer they left. Traumatized and scared to death, their new neighbors saw the three as outsiders. They'd made it clear to Bilal and his family that they weren't interested in helping.

Bilal's heart pounded when his father stirred and woke from his drunken nap. That evening went from bad to worse for Bilal and his brother. When he awoke from a painful night and stepped from their hut into the morning sun, Bilal's mouth still throbbed, but now his

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eye was swollen, and the back of his legs burned from the repeated blows delivered by his father's homemade switch.

Bilal glanced back through the doorway to take one last look at his father, still asleep in the dirt. He thought sadly about his life before the attack on his village. Shaking his head and swallowing the lump in his throat, he set his jaw and left his father's hut for the last time.

THE SOUTH SUDANESE SUN POURED IN THROUGH the open door of the mud hut. Gasim turned over on the hard floor of red dirt. Then he quickly sat upright.

Something wasn't right.

Where was his mother? She was normally up before him, heating water over the fire. When it boiled, she'd add whatever sticks and leaves she found the night before for her children to eat for breakfast.

This morning, the ashes from last night's fire lay exactly as they fell when the fire died. Gasim's sister still slumbered next to him. Venturing out of the hut, he looked around.

The neighbors buzzed about their daily business. Everything seemed normal. But his mother was nowhere to be found. *Where was she?*

She didn't return that evening, or the following morning. A few days later, a group of much older, stronger boys arrived at his hut. They shoved him to the ground, and one pinned him down while the others took the few items of value left in the home - the blanket he slept on and the large pot his mother used for making meals.

As they left, the one who'd held him down punched him hard in the face. Blood gushed from his nose as he cried out in pain. They took his sister with them.

IT HAD HAPPENED YEARS AGO, but Aruna had been haunted by the memory of what he'd done every single night since.

Aruna's parents were killed when a neighboring tribe raided his village. A young boy, alone, vulnerable, terrified and with nowhere to turn, he joined forces with several others about his age, also left to fend for themselves.

Roaming aimlessly between villages and cities, they managed to stay alive by bullying, threatening and stealing.

One night, they came into conflict with another group of youngsters, every bit as desperate and traumatized as they were. In the course of the encounter, Aruna and his gang murdered the rival gang member for the insult. He hadn't even thought twice about it then. Years later, the memory still harasses him.

No alcohol or substance made it go away completely, though there was one substance he and his gang used when they could get their hands on it to make them unafraid of anything.

Under its influence, they acted brazen and fearless. It felt good to get relief from their tormenting fears that had no reason to be calmed. Every time Aruna came to his senses, though, he remembered the look in the boy's eyes right before he'd ended that life.

Aruna hadn't thought about the possibility of life being precious. He'd seen so many acts of violence. He'd just thought of violence as a normal part of life, like going to school or waking up in the morning. But the agonizing memory begged to differ.

These stories are derived from the stories told by gang members who live in the Kugi residential area of South Sudan. These are young men are about 16 years old to early 20s, although there were a few as old as 27 and 36 and some as young as 10.

Before the event Juba residents call "the war of 2015", South Sudanese opposition leader, Riak Machar, lived in the Kugi residential area at the foot of a mountain outside Juba. In 2015, Machar was chased from the area and many were killed.

The people now living there are marginalized from society, living in this area that the government ignores, perhaps hoping the rival gangs will kill each other off.

Though the people living in the Kugi residential area have experienced much trauma and suffering, no relief organizations have ventured there and no one has offered physical or emotional assistance. The government has ignored the plight of these civilians living in the area they see as a "rebel" area.

The youth are left on their own, many of their parents expect them to somehow provide for the family.

To cope, they've formed gangs. In this year alone, one gang from Kugi residential area has killed three members of another gang and buried two of its own members.

A month or so ago, the gang leader asked ITMI's [Lazarus Yezinai](#) to lead a workshop for his gang. Lazarus eagerly complied.

On the first day of the training, the gang leader addressed his followers. He welcomed them, saying that he was deeply happy to have this workshop. He urged them to respect themselves and the people who would be teaching and pay attention the entire three days.

"No one thinks about us, some people see us as bad and useless human beings," he reminded them, "But *Abuna Lazarus* has considered us his brothers and sisters."

Lazarus led the 61 gang members in attendance through a Biblical understanding of conflict with a series of small group



From the Director



Dear Team: Your Gifts Mean Jesus' Clarity Where Once There Was Confusion

In the 14th century classic, *Inferno*, Italian author Dante Alighieri began his epic poem with these words:

"Midway on our life's journey, I found myself in dark woods, the right road lost."

These words, which date back 700 years (1320), speak with such relevance to the confusion that marks so many today. Conversely, Jesus promised clarity for those who seek the path He alone provides (Matthew 7:13-14).

How We Offer Jesus' Clarity With Clear Water

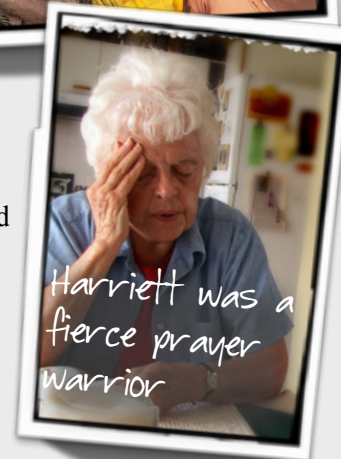
This past month ITMI's [Kent Reisenauer](#) has been in Zambia and South Africa visiting some of our partners and projects, encouraging them to press on. Kent spent quality time with [Timothy Keller](#) as Tim handled the transport and driving chores from Lusaka to the far northwestern corner and community of Chavuma, Zambia. On arrival in Chavuma they delivered food supplies for [Johan and Lesley Leach](#) from the nearest grocery store, which is about 6 hours away. This was a huge blessing for Johan and Lesley as they manage the putting a new roof on their newly constructed mission house and the [logistics of getting five wells drilled near the Angola border](#). Kent and the team then loaded up into a four-wheel-drive vehicle and transported the vehicle on a barge across the massive Zambezi River so that the former architect and project manager could see first-hand the water well drilling in the extremely remote and equally needy villages. Kent reports that the excitement on the faces of the villagers was so gratifying and reaffirming of why we use water wells to give liquid life and to offer Jesus' clarity and a path out of the dark woods of isolation and Animistic confusion they've wandered in for so long.

Will You Carry on Harriett's Legacy of Prayer?

Almost 19 years ago **Bill Bathman** asked to meet with me. He told me that he was wanting to finish his days living, preaching and mentoring in Africa, and ITMI needed a new director. As a board member of ITMI, I wholeheartedly supported the work that Bill and **Harriett** had started and managed so expertly for many years. I shared with Bill that as much as I would love to be the director of ITMI, I just couldn't do it. You see, I had a good job that was paying the bills and helping me care for my family of five. Bill very graciously said that he understood my answer and asked if I would pray about it. I agreed to do just that. Then revealed what I would later come to know as "the secret weapon". Bill told me that Harriett was also praying about his offer to me. Bill's exact words were, "...you don't want to be on the other side of what Harriett is praying about." The rest is history. As convincing as one William Bathman could be, and anyone who ever met him knows what I mean, he didn't even hold a candle to his dear praying wife when it came to moving people to obedience and changing situations for His glory. Last month, Harriett was granted her deep desire to be reunited with her husband of 65 years. Harriett, thank you for your prayers for ITMI, our projects and me for so, so many years. **I ask now, will you take the baton from Harriett and become one of our deeply needed prayer warriors?** You don't have to be in Africa or India or Eastern Europe to be a partner with ITMI, you can do it on your knees from wherever God has planted you. Please, please will you become our faithful partner in prayer? We need you and we need God's guidance more now than ever.

In His Service,

P.S. Your prayer and support is making a BIG IMPACT for 5 more villages who now have clean water and have heard the Truth!



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discussions. Some parents of these youth came to Lazarus excited about the positive changes they observed in the lives of their young men.

Several gang members received Christ during the three day workshop. This initial open door to conduct the event is just the beginning. It happened quickly, because Lazarus is available to respond to this need when the door opened. Lazarus wouldn't be ready and available to respond to such needs if not for ITMI and our precious supporters standing behind him financially and prayerfully.

When Lazarus returns from a mid-September trip to train pastors and leaders in Ibba, he will put together a one day follow up event with the gang. Perhaps it won't be long before we can announce even greater opportunities to partner with Lazarus to deepen his impact in the lives of these youth.

Opportunities such as a similar workshop for a rival gang, or a healing and peacemaking event for both gangs. Perhaps there will even be opportunities to help Lazarus set up a sports outreach, a simple community center or a school where some of them can complete the education that was stolen from them by their circumstances. The possibilities are so exciting!

Lazarus is still prayerfully waiting to see how the Lord leads this new ministry. Until it develops a little more, we'd ask you to pray for the young men in this gang and ask the Lord to clarify your own future involvement in reaching these lost for Him.

-Summer Kelley, Steve Evers



NEWSBITES

INDIA

Last month, 70 rural villagers in two towns completed the sixth and final evangelism training provided by [David Kumar](#). They are excited to now be equipped to share Jesus with their Muslim friends and neighbors.

ZAMBIA

Five new wells that were provided by ITMI supporters were dug near the border of Zambia and Angola last month, providing villagers with clean safe water and paving the way for the gospel to be delivered by evangelists trained by Johan Leach to this new cluster of villages and into Angola.

POLAND/MOLDOVA

ITMI's [Richard Nungesser](#) returned to Moldova last month with prescription glasses for many who can't afford eye care after exams were provided in July by a Bread of Life team who sacrificially demonstrated the love of Jesus.

For Praise

1. South Sudan - Lazarus Yezinai - Salvations and seeds planted at a 3 day gang workshop last month.
2. Zambia - Johan Leach - Five wells provided by ITMI supporters paving the way for the gospel in a new area!
3. Zambia/South Africa - Kent Riesenauer - Many opportunities to encourage and minister during last month's travels.
4. Poland - Leszek and Anna Wakula - Lodz Baptist Church, which Leszek pastors, celebrating 151 years of ministry to the city.

For Prayer

1. India - Paul and Molly - Comfort as they and their 19 girls yearn to be back in their village home, all together again. Some of the girls suffered anxiety, sleeping and stomach issues after the traumatic move.
2. India - Paul and Molly - Provision of funds to bless and encourage their girls and the families hosting them with an outing.
3. Poland - Leszek and Anna Wakula - Opportunities to share Jesus and build relationships at Women's Conference in early Oct.
4. Zimbabwe - Charl van Wyk - Communist government's release of property given to Cozmore's ministry after more than a year of red tape barring progress.
5. USA - Lift up ITMI as we have had an unusually lean year in support of [ITMI's operational needs](#).



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A higher purpose.

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