

**Missions Stories
to Accompany
Club VBS 2009**



Club VBS 2009

Trek I: Missions Story

Honoring God by Telling Others About Jesus

The air is hot in the cement schoolhouse where Edinaldo (eh-dee-NAHL-doe) finishes his assignment on the last day of school. His classmates are already playing on the lawn outside, and soon he will join them. It is likely, however, that many of these students will not return to school in the fall. They have completed fourth grade—the last grade offered in the Quilombos (key-LUM-bose), villages in Tombo, Brazil.

The teacher, Ivanilson Costa, once was a student in the area, but he had the rare opportunity to attend fifth through eighth grades in another town. He didn't plan on returning to Quilombola (key-lum-BO-lah) villages to teach. However, when Mr. Costa became a Christian, he felt God calling him to return so that he could teach school and also tell others about Jesus.

When Mr. Costa moved to Tombo, he was the only Christian in the village. He prayed for months that someone would help him tell about Jesus. God answered his prayer by sending International Mission Board missionaries, Keith and Deborah Jefferson.

The Quilombola people live in about 2,800 remote villages in the beautiful countryside of Brazil, far away from crowded, modern cities. Very few have heard about Jesus.

People like Mr. Costa and the Jeffersons honor God by obeying His command in Matthew 28 to tell others about Jesus. Even volunteers from a church in Lynchburg, Virginia, travel to these villages to work with missionaries and nationals as they preach and help these villagers.

The task of reaching these Quilombos will not be easy. Bumpy roads, heavy rains, and mountains make traveling in these areas hard. "There will never be enough missionaries, so we're here to encourage and train the Brazilians to reach the people groups of Brazil," said Mr. Jefferson.

Pray for Mr. Costa and the Jeffersons as they honor God by telling people in Brazil about Jesus. Pray for other Christians in Brazil that they will honor God by telling other people in their country the good news of Jesus.

Adapted from *Invisible Boundaries: Overcoming Isolation to Reach the Quilombolas* by Kristen Hiller, International Mission Board. Used by permission.

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Trek 2: Missions Story

Truck Stop Ministries—Encouraging Those Who Are Away from Family

When was the last time you saw an 18-wheeler? An 18-wheeler is one of those gigantic trucks with many wheels that haul things from city to city. Do you ever wonder what it's like to spend time on the road driving a big rig? Do you think it would be a lot of fun? Do you think it may be lonely? You would see many sights as you traveled the country. You would meet many different people. However, you would be away from your family for days or weeks at a time.

After hours of driving, truckers usually stop at truck stops for food, fuel, and even to take a shower! Now some truck stops around the country also have a chapel, and some even have a truck stop chaplain who can help truckers with problems and share God's love with them.

Tommy Thomas is a North American missionary who lives in Kingman, Arizona. As director of missions for River Valley Baptist Association, Tommy works with many ministries. However, his truck stop ministry is one that is really growing. Because truck drivers are away from their families and friends, having a truck stop chapel to go to and a chaplain to speak with is important for encouragement, counseling, and friendship. Many truck drivers have to work on Sunday, so they may not ever get to go to church with their families. The truck stop chapel allows them to stop and have a time of Bible study—and an opportunity to share with other truckers about the love of Jesus.

Tommy Thomas has been an encourager to many truckers, and he has seen many accept Jesus as their Savior and Lord. One trucker was abusing drugs. He stopped at the chapel and met Tommy. Tommy helped the man understand that God loved him and wanted him to be healthy. The man believed what Tommy was saying. He prayed for Jesus to become his Savior and to help him give up using drugs. Then the man went back to his truck, took out all of his drugs, and threw them away! The man's actions honored God and his family.

Tommy wonders what would happen if there were no truck stop ministries and no one to tell the truckers about Jesus. Pray for Tommy Thomas as he continues to minister to truckers. Pray that truck drivers will learn about truck stop chapels and ministries like the one in Kingman where they can receive encouragement and help and can hear about Jesus. Pray also for Tommy Thomas's other ministries including ministry to prisoners, Native Americans, boaters, snow boarders, and bikers.

Taken from "Don't Miss This Truck Stop!" written by Kima Jude in the March 2008 *Crusader* magazine.

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Trek 3: Missions Story

Respecting the Gift of Life

Luke was enjoying the ride on his dad's shoulders as they strolled through a crowded market in the Middle East. After a while, Luke's dad needed a break since his 10-year-old was getting heavy. He was a little worried, though, how shoppers might react since Luke has Down syndrome.

A few years earlier, Luke's parents believed God wanted them to move their family to a Middle Eastern country so that they could tell others about Jesus. Even knowing that it wouldn't be easy to live on another continent, two years ago they moved. Would the people there accept Luke and the rest of their family because they were different?

When Mike put Luke down from his shoulders in the busy market, a man came up to Luke and looked at him carefully. He brought another man over, and they both gently touched Luke's face and hair. More people were called over until about 25 people gathered around Luke.

Suddenly, a man raised Luke on his shoulders, and the crowd cheered "Arafat, Arafat!" Luke happily raised his fists and pumped them in the air to the beat of the cheers. A translator explained to Mike that one of the men had been the father of a son with Down syndrome. The son, Arafat, had passed away just months earlier. The people had missed seeing Arafat in the market where he used to sit in the same spot where Luke had been placed. Luke's presence in the market brought joy to the father and the people. The people showed great respect for Luke and his family.

"God gave us this child 10 years ago because He knew he would reach these people, at this time, in this place," said Mike. "We would have never known how God could use Luke unless we went. God can use a boy with Down syndrome."

Pray for the Luke's family as they continue to tell people in the Middle East about Jesus. Thank God that He can use anyone, especially Luke, to share His love with others.

Adapted from *No Excuse*, North Africa and the Middle East, <http://www.experiencename.com>, International Mission Board. Used by permission.

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Trek 4: Missions Story

Respecting Those Who Are Different

North American missionary Louis Spears lives in Mesa, Arizona, where he is pastor of The Bridge Fellowship Church. He ministers to the Travelers, a group of people who got their name because they don't live in the same place for a very long time. Instead, they travel around doing different kinds of construction jobs. Because of their lifestyle, Travelers often live in RV (recreation vehicle) parks. After a few weeks on a town, they will move and find work in another place.

Travelers came to the United States from Europe because they felt unwelcome there. People did not understand them because of their different lifestyle. Travelers have often been called "Gypsies," a name that Travelers believe is disrespectful. In most places they live, Travelers are not accepted and often feel like outsiders. They even speak a kind of language of their own, using words that other people do not understand. For example, Travelers call people like us gorjer (GORE-ger). The word means that we are non-Travelers. To them we are the outsiders!

Louis Spears discovered the Travelers in his area when one started coming to the church he pastors. Louis noticed George right away. George never left an address or phone number, and he always slipped away after the worship service without talking to anyone. Louis tried to let George know that he was welcome at the church. Week after week, Louis told George through his sermons how much God loved him. One day George accepted Jesus as his Savior.

George stepped outside of the closed community of Travelers, outsiders who had banded together, and into the circle of other believers and followers of Jesus Christ. Although George was still a Traveler, he was a Christian, too. He understood he was a very valuable person to God and a part of His family. Other believers accepted George and showed him respect even though he lived a different way of life.

Pray and thank God for missionary Louis Spears and his ministry with the Travelers. Pray that Travelers and others who feel like outsiders will understand that God loves them and wants them to trust Jesus as their Savior.

Taken from "Welcome Home" written by Kima Jude as a SnackPack Missions lesson produced by the North American Mission Board in 2008. Used by permission.

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Trek 5: Missions Story

Following Jesus in West Africa

Zak was one of the first Nafana (Nah-FAH-nah) people to become a Christian after International Mission Board missionaries Jerry and Carol Robertson began teaching stories from the Bible in Cote d'Ivoire, West Africa. When he learned "the Jesus way," Zak wanted to tell others about Jesus, too.

The man really began to spread the word about Jesus after he was bitten by a poisonous snake and almost died. His family was sure he would die.

"They were already in mourning. My foot was swelling, and I couldn't walk on it," said Zak. But he told his family, "I'm not afraid to die. If I die, God will be with me."

When Zak got well a few days later, people couldn't believe it and began asking him questions. Zak was able to tell his family and friends about God. Eight members of his family became Christians, including Siata (SEE-ah-tah), Zak's mother-in-law. Siata then told her 70-year-old mother about Jesus, who also became a Christian. Siata's mother walked 14 miles in the sizzling African heat to take the news of Jesus to two other villages.

Zak said that about 40 more Nafana are considering Christianity. He continues to witness and share the stories that he learned from the Robertsons.

In Cote d'Ivoire and surrounding countries, there are about 95,000 Nafana people. Following Jesus is everything to these new Nafana believers, even though family members may become mad at them for becoming Christians. Their lives have changed. Instead of being angry about their difficult circumstances, they pray. They love the Bible and can't wait to tell others about "the Jesus way."

"We would like for people to pray that the Nafana people will learn God's Word and that their lives will be transformed," said Mr. Robertson.

Pray for the Robertsons as they continue to tell people in West Africa about Jesus. Pray that the Nafana Christians will continue to tell their people about Jesus and that many will accept Jesus as their Savior.

Adapted from *Nafana People Spread "the Jesus Way"* by Jeslyn Lemke, <http://gowestafrica.org>, International Mission Board. Used by permission