

When the Story Cuts Through



Intercultural Worker Melanie is amazed, but not surprised, by the transformation of her friend as she encounters the power of God's Word.

Since Tim and I came to Malawi, teaching God's Word has always been a high priority. We don't teach at people, we learn with them. God's word is alive, fresh and real. Every time we read it we learn something new. There's a power in the Word that transcends, it cuts to the heart and penetrates even the hardest exterior.

Years ago, in the early days of our friendship, Mama Falida would sit next to me in the group speechless and wide-eyed. She was a village girl who'd come to town and was overwhelmed. Feeling completely out of her depth she would try to satisfy her desire to know more but struggled with the insecurities she was feeling. I wondered if what was being said was getting through. Did she understand the story she was hearing?

Over time, despite her never speaking up in the group, we watched the Holy Spirit work in her life. A spiritual rebirth was freedom for her and we could see her growing and changing almost on a daily basis. She learnt her value in Christ, she learnt to stand up for what she believed in and she began to tell others about the Good News.

As I visited with her one day recently, I shared my heart. Our friendship had grown through the years. I'd been there when her children were born, we'd cried at funerals together and celebrated through the good times unpacking what it meant to live in freedom.

I told her that I had been worried about the future, about coronavirus and the impact the restrictions were having on the community. I shared that I didn't know what God was doing and I didn't know how we were going to help so many if the predictions were right.

Mama Falida quietly sat and listened to my ramble, she didn't interrupt and she didn't make me feel at all uncomfortable. Instead, she nodded her head, laughed with me and let me finish. She then looked at me with a smile on her face, "Pepani Mama, cikulupi cili kwapi" "Sorry Mama, but where is your faith? Don't you remember the story of when Jesus calmed the storm? His disciples were all worried but Jesus was asleep. He didn't worry because He knew God would protect and care for them. This is our story, this is what God is saying to us. Don't look at the waves and the wind. Don't look at coronavirus and the lockdown, look to Jesus."

Mama Falida doesn't have access to the world COVID statistics, she doesn't know all the ins and outs of restrictions, nor does she know exactly how the virus is spread or the impact it will have. Mama Falida trusts Jesus with all her heart and reminded me to do the same. She used the very words I had taught her years ago to rebuke my doubt and boost my faith. She reminded me that God's Word cuts like a knife and brings life and hope in a world that sorely needs it.

