

# THROUGH MY EYES

## BURKINA FASO MISSION

Paul V. Anderson  
November 2017



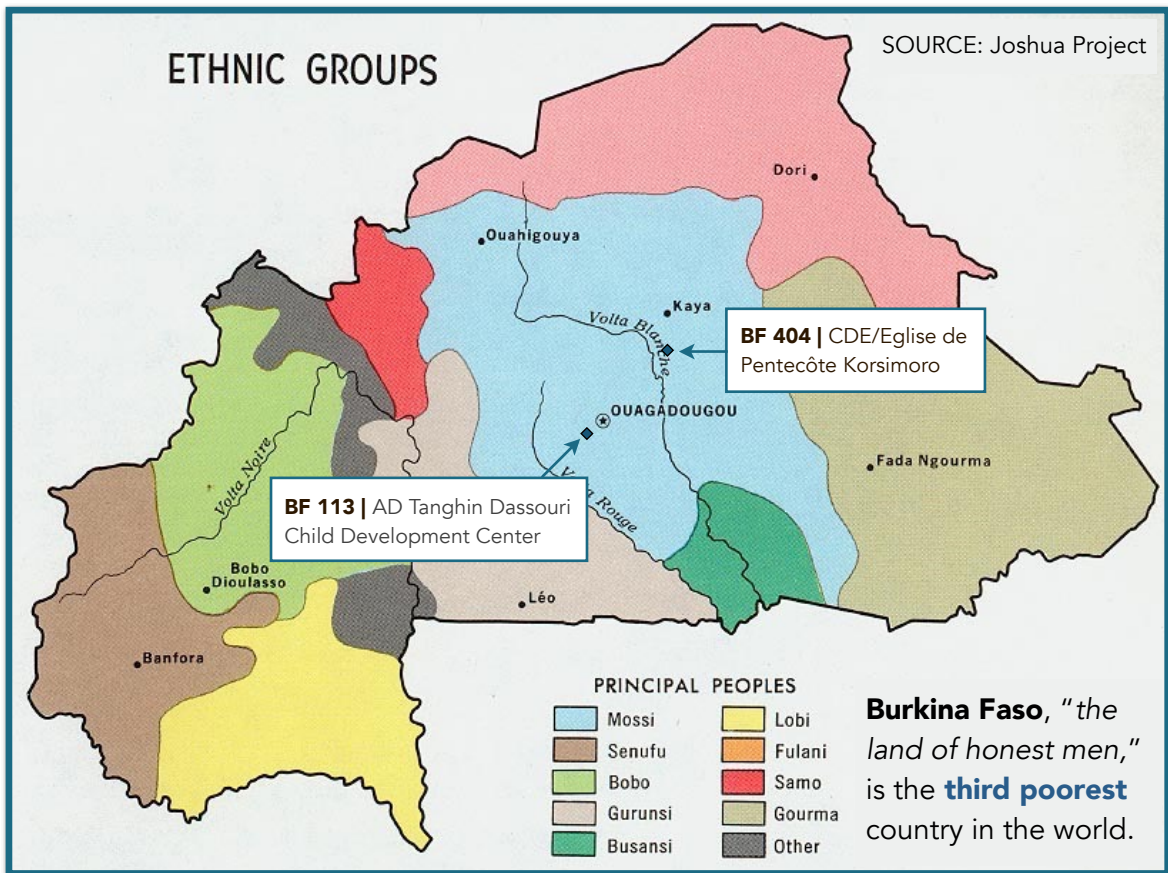
MONTEREYCHURCH



*"But since we were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time, in person not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face, because we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, again and again—but Satan hindered us. For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? **For you are our glory and joy.**"*

1 Thess. 2:17-20 (ESV)





## ON THE WAY THERE | 08 November 2017

As I write this, I gaze out the window of the A330 into a bleak Belgian day at Brussels Airport, hopeful for what lies ahead. It is 11:30 local time, and I am ready to begin the third and final leg of my journey to Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. The Lord has already encouraged me greatly on this trip, as many missionaries surround me, moving out in faith and obedience to sow the seeds of the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout Africa.

On the leg from Washington to Brussels, I sat next to two disciples, Trevor and Jacob, each unknown to one another prior to this flight, but each called to walk in the good works that God in His sovereignty has prepared for them—the former to Germany to partner with missionaries there, and the latter to teach in a rural school in Uganda. In Brussels, we met two disciples from Cincinnati heading to Africa to teach in two Bible colleges that their church, New Life Covenant Church, had established. How edifying it is to meet fellow brothers in Christ, willing and eager to be His hands and feet among African communities. I have enjoyed fellowship with Pastor Bryan, his daughter Rachel, Eric Sisk (who recently moved from Virginia to South Carolina), and Duncan Sprague from Compassion International USA (our trip leader and a well-traveled pastor with a heart for children and ministry).

Although I am physically tired, I am spiritually uplifted and expectant that this team will experience faith-transforming grace in the midst of some of the poorest communities in the world in Burkina Faso. The Spirit is drawing me to Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso like a magnet, and I cannot wait to see what our Father has prepared beforehand for us to do during our time on the ground there. And now, it is time for me to attempt to sleep during this leg—the mission begins tomorrow, and I must be physically able to keep in step with the Spirit, however He wills to lead this amazing team from Monterey Church.

*"Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours." —Mark 11:23-24 (ESV)*

After a smooth flight, our plane touched down in Ouagadougou at around 16:45 local time. My heart was racing as I absorbed the sight out the window while on final approach. Lengthy, dirt roads spiraling almost haphazardly throughout the landscape, small villages dotting the horizon, and colorful clusters of metal structures coming into view as we approached the airport—very different sights than those I am accustomed to seeing while traveling in the states. Welcome to Burkina Faso!



*Flying over the Sahara Desert.*

We took a set of mobile stairs down to the tarmac, boarded a bus over to customs, and passed through customs and airport security into the heart of Ouagadougou. Our crew from Virginia was met by Viviane and John, two friendly Burkinabé people who work in-country for Compassion, who then transported us via a van through bumpy city streets congested with motorbikes and dilapidated roadside markets on the way to the hotel. A “Mad Max-like” dystopian setting for a typical American, but the day-to-day reality for Burkinabé people in Ouagadougou.

After dinner with the Virginia crew (our California teammates would arrive later that night), Eric and I turned in for the night to prepare for the day ahead, pray together, and get some much-needed rest after a lengthy 22 hours of travel to this continent.

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## **DAY 1 | 09 November 2017**

Today was our first day on the ground, on-mission in Burkina Faso. Our day’s activities were full, but my heart is even fuller as I reflect upon my experiences. The team of 12 from Monterey Church and Compassion boarded a passenger van with Viviane, John, and our three translators—Samuel, Josias, and Timothee. These three friends work in the Compassion office in Ouagadougou, translating letters sent to Burkina Faso into local languages, commonly French or Mooré (the language of the Mossi people). We headed to BF 0113, located in Tanghin Dassouri, 23 km southwest of Ouagadougou.



The beautiful children of this project—355 of them—greeted us happily with clapping and song along the entryway. Mothers of Compassion’s Child Survival Program (CSP), families of the sponsored children, and pastors of the local church also greeted us with a great welcome. I was moved to the point of tears by this gesture—these children, having so very little in a material sense, had so much to offer us, and I was blessed beyond measure at their joyful welcome. They exuded divine joy that is found in the Lord and in the Lord alone, and I was so choked up by their precious presence that I could barely enter the project. May I always remember this moment. Praise to Him!



*CSP’s mothers dancing with their babies.*

After a lengthy welcome service in which women and children danced for us, and the local pastors and mayor of the district gave words of encouragement and welcome, we spent our late morning and early afternoon playing with and serving the children of the project. I played frisbee and ball with the young boys, running to and fro with them in the dust, taking photos of their shy and smiling faces, and serving them rice and fish at lunch. These children are precious, and every one of them has been made in the

image of our Creator God. How blessed are the feet of those bringing Good News, preaching the Gospel of Christ Jesus with our love and actions, offering words of encouragement to these children through translators when led by the Spirit to do so.

The team split into three teams for the afternoon’s home visits. Bryan, Rachel, Calista, and I traveled into a rural compound escorted by two armed police guards. I slung a bag of rice over my shoulder, and walked into the family’s home, a collection of mud huts and straw



*We were ready to serve lunch to this line of children.*

structures surrounded by weary fields, dehydrated from a lack of rain. The family is Muslim, and the head of the household has two wives and 13 children, only two of whom still live at home. We talked with this family about their lives, their struggles with agriculture, and how Compassion has brought a slice of hope to them. Then, I led a prayer through the translator for the blessing of God upon their home, and we exchanged gifts. They received with wonder and gladness many home goods, hygiene goods, and toys for the children, and graciously offered us a bowl of peanuts, and a live chicken. Even in their poverty, they freely offered to us what little they had.

*“And he called his disciples to him and said to them, ‘Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.’” —Mark 12:43–44 (ESV)*

After heading back to BF 0113, I played frisbee and ball with the boys, and the women washed the feet of the Burkinabé women in the CSP. It blessed me to see the infectious joy of these young boys when presented with a large exercise ball, which they swarmed around, kicking to and fro and screaming with delight in their new gift. Kids would run into and knock each other over in the commotion, collapsing into piles of laughter—kids are kids are kids, no matter the ethnicity, language spoken, or geographic location!



*Hanging out with the kids (and young adults) of BF 0113, each created uniquely in God's image.*

Our team also had the opportunity to visit the soap production business that Monterey Church funded recently via a complimentary intervention (CIV) investment through Compassion, and we purchased soap products created on-site to the delight of the project's workers overseeing these exchanges.

As we were preparing to head back to the hotel, the children gave heartfelt

goodbyes filled with hugs, high-fives, and hand-holds. We headed back to the hotel, had dinner, and then unpacked the day as a team. How thrilling it was for me to hear of the mighty works the Lord was working through all of us, and how this trip was already bringing about faith-strengthening experiences for each of us in unique ways. We're on a short-term mission trip through which we are building long-term relationships in the name of Christ Jesus, to the glory of God the Father. We'll be coming back. I'll be coming back. I love these people too much not to do so, and I've already left part of my heart here.

Tomorrow, I'll be meeting the two young girls that I will be sponsoring here in Burkina —Myriam and Fatimata. I cannot wait to see what the Lord has in store for this team!

## DAY 2 | 10 November 2017

Today was another packed day that left my heart full! The team traveled nearly an hour on rough, dusty roads passing through arid countryside to Child Development Center BF 0404 in Korsimoro, 30 km south of Kaya, Burkina Faso.

As soon as we arrived, we were greeted by two rows of clapping and singing children, some grinning, and others shy at our coming, similar to the day before at BF 0113. We were warmly welcomed by the pastor and project staff, and given a marvelous glimpse into Burkinabé culture with a performance of traditional dance to a drum played by a skillful boy dressed in cultural attire. The moment the dance performance, greetings, and a beautiful prayer by Bryan concluded, the team set to playing with the children, and I was brought to meet and sit with the two girls I had chosen to sponsor (rather, God had chosen for me to sponsor) two days earlier—Myriam and Fatimata,



*Meeting Myriam and Fatimata for the first time, with John translating.*



two girls with the same family name and sponsor numbers only a digit apart. At first, I thought I was sponsoring two sisters, but after speaking with one of the staff through a translator, learned that they are not sisters, but best friends—“sisters” of another kind!



*With Myriam and her mother.*

Myriam is 6 years old, and lives with her father and mother, Rachelle, whom I had the pleasure of meeting. She expressed how incredibly grateful she was that her prayer for a sponsor for her daughter had been answered—that morning—with my arrival at their project. Myriam was very shy, and did not smile the entire time I was with her. She did tell me that she is in the first grade at school, and enjoys dancing.



*With Fatimata and her aunt.*

Fatimata is 5 years old, and lives with her aunt, Margaret, because both of her parents have passed away. She was shy like Myriam at first, but then became very smily as the translator and I continued to speak with her, and I ended up seeing her throughout the day. One of the staff members, Isaiah, spoke to me about how profound it was that God provided the same sponsor for two girls who are best friends in this project. This blessed both of us, and encouraged me greatly to be reminded that our God is a God of provision in most beautiful ways. I learned that Fatimata likes singing, and

I had the opportunity to meet her aunt at nearly the same time I met Myriam’s mother. Blessings upon blessings—my heart was full, and it wasn’t yet lunch time!

BF 0404 has a three-room schoolhouse that Monterey Church funded the construction of via a Compassion CIV. Bryan and I walked into one of these classrooms, a bare room with desks scattered about, and chalkboard filled with drawings and lessons in French. We contemplated the long-term vision for our financial investment and sowing into this community, and I perceived that God’s work for our church in Burkina Faso has only just begun. We are being called by God to be a light in the world in the midst of this weary

nation, driving back the darkness and establishing His Kingdom—here and now, in this place. I am convicted that we must sow into these children, because if we don't, no one will, even knowing that the fruit of our labors may not be made fully manifest in this generation or the next.



*Korsimoro: a dry, dusty, and arid landscape.*

Our home visit today was to the compound of a Muslim family with seven children. The head of this household rested upon his prayer mat, holding beads and wearied from an existence of ongoing struggle. He listened intently as his wife related how Compassion has been foundational to meeting their physical needs. She spoke with holy fire in her eyes, praising God and blessing us through tears over and over again for coming to tell her

that we care about her family. We conversed, exchanged gifts, and prayed that our Father would heal the hurt leg of this father, and that he would know that Jesus Himself would be responsible for this miraculous healing that we are all expectant will happen.



*Sign adorning the staff's offices at BF 0404.*

Our outing to BF 0404 wrapped up with a joyous time of play with the kids back at the project. A troupe of young boys offered a dilapidated mountain bike and motioned for me to ride it, and they shouted with glee and began chasing me around and racing me with other bikes (at one point, I raced

Bryan on another bike, and another time I ran on foot while a boy raced me on his bike). After this, Eric and I played soccer with a large inflatable ball, and this cluster of children chased the ball to and fro, running into one another, falling down with roars of

laughter, and plucking one another up to continue chasing the big ball. The scene was chaotic and magnetic—the entire community was being drawn to the project, with people passing by halting to watch, people emerging from neighboring homes, and groups of children not enrolled in this project looking on from afar. It is incredible to witness these projects as focal points of these communities!

As we left, the children held my hand, high-fived me, fist-bumped me, and called out my name repeatedly with grins and laughter. I felt in that moment the way Jesus must have as he traveled around Judea during His ministry, people clinging to His garments, and trying to touch Him in any way that they might be healed. In a sense, I was healing these children, too, as they reached up to me with twinkles in their eyes, knowing that I and this team were sent by God for this very purpose: to tell these children of the dust that they are precious and loved, and that they have not and will never be forgotten in our sight—and in the sight of our Father in Heaven.



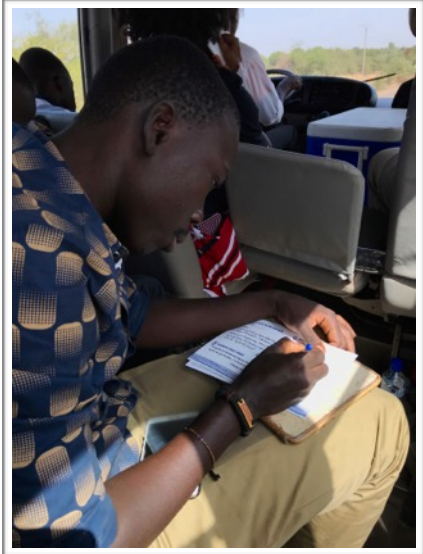
*The joy of the children was infectious and divine, blessing me in many mighty ways.*

*"The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade on your right hand.  
The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night."  
—Psalm 121:5–6 (ESV)*

### **DAY 3** | 11 November 2017

Today is Saturday, the day that the children attend school in the Compassion projects to learn and grow in the spiritual, cognitive, physical, social, and emotional aspects of their development. Our team had the privilege of traveling back to Korsimoro and BF 0404 to guest teach in these classrooms that Monterey Church built—such an honor!





Samuel translating my letters to Myriam and Fatimata in the van.

As we entered into the center, a group of the children ceremoniously placed straw and leather hats upon our heads. Given that I nearly burned my face and neck yesterday (even with sunscreen!), I received this hat with gladness, and will treasure it for years to come.

As we walked past the schoolhouse, the children were already in class, and they smiled and waved at us, grinning from ear to ear and piling on one another to catch a glimpse of us out the windows of the classrooms. Our team split into five teams, each assigned a unique activity to teach and interact with the children in 15-minute segments, and we rotated through the five classrooms of BF 0404 (each a

different age group of students) over the next hour and a half. Veronica and I paired up to teach the students Matthew 5:14 and encourage them to be “lights of the world” in their communities and beyond.

*“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” —Matthew 5:14–16 (ESV)*

We led each class of students through a short lesson on the passage, and then colored on paper with them. On several occasions, I grabbed a sheet of paper and sat down to color next to the students on their desks, drawing the Name above all Names, Jesus, in large bubble letters and then gifting it to the child next to me. In one class, the girl I sat next to immediately broke into a surprised smile, hiding her face behind her paper and shyly peeking at me, as if overjoyed that I would choose her to color with. In every class we encouraged the children, telling them that they are loved by us and by our Father in Heaven, and that we had traveled a very long way from the U.S. to tell them that—and the looks on their precious faces and the twinkles in their eyes when we told them this!

After finishing the lesson and the coloring, we collected the crayons and gifted each of the children a rubber ball (large fun in a small package), and with parting words moved outside to the next classroom. Each time we transitioned, I soaked in the scene of the relay races that Leland and Eric were leading—a cacophony of joy resounding beyond the project and into the village streets as the children ran three-legged races, balanced bean bags on their heads, and played dizzy bat. This joy is a divine one, and infectious, as the laughter of these children magnified the presence of the Lord in this community.



*Teaching in the schoolroom that Monterey built.*



*Wearing my new hat after classes finished.*

This afternoon, after class and lunch had wrapped-up, an older dance troupe from BF 0500 (a group that is gaining national renown for its talent) performed an interpretive dance for us, which captured the struggles of the Christian life with traditional instruments accompanying an incredibly descriptive story told through dance. During the performance, I surveyed the onlooking children, and caught Myriam and Fatimata following each other around in a small group of girls (whom I saw in school earlier that day)—I smiled at this confirmation of what I was told yesterday

about their friendship! Afterwards, our team prayed with great power with the church pastor and staff over all the children, lifting hands high to ask for the spiritual covering of God over this place. Emerging from the crowd of over 300 children came Fatimata,

who walked up and gently held my hand, as a daughter would hold the hand of her father.

Today, the Lord showed me what true prayer looks like. We prayed over the children, and then separately over the pastor and project staff, the dance troupe from BF 0500, and a young woman (a teacher in the school) who had opened her hands to receive Christ during Bryan's presentation of the Good News to the students earlier that day. There is great power in the laying on of hands, and in the command to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17). I am already perceiving that this trip is one of instruction and exhortation for me—and I hope in the Spirit to live out these lessons back in the U.S.!

It was hard to leave BF 0404, since we won't be back on this trip. The children clung on to me, calling me by name ("Paul, Paul, PAUL!"), and showing me the rubber balls that I had given them. With a grin, I tossed a few extra rubber balls that I had in my pocket to the children, and boarded the van. It's been heartbreaking to leave each day, and I cannot quite find the words that precisely convey the emotions that I have been experiencing in these moments. I take courage in knowing that I am being torn away in person, not in heart, and only for a short time, as I hope in the Lord Jesus—if it be His will—to return to these Burkinabé children of the Kingdom.



*With Paul (left), a dancer in the troupe from BF 0500, and our translator Timothee (right).*

## DAY 4 | 12 November 2017

I cannot believe that today is already Sunday, and that our mission trip to Burkina Faso will shortly be coming to a close. Today is the Lord's Day, and our team returned to BF 0113 to attend this center's church service as special guests and worship with the local congregation there. The roughly-hewn church building, with its concrete walls, wooden





*Pastor Bryan delivering a Spirit-filled message of blessing and edification.*

benches, and bare floors, was magnificently arrayed in bright colors and patterns worn by the Burkinabé men, women, and children in attendance. The service was incredibly worshipful and charismatic—a variety of choirs and soloists performed from their seats, and the congregation sang and danced along with all of their hearts, in praise of God. At the pastor’s leading, everyone in the congregation would pray out loud at the same time, with hundreds of voices in different languages (English, French, Mooré, and spiritual tongues, too) offering their prayers to the throne as a pleasing aroma before the Lord with much shouting, indeed but a momentary glimpse into what heaven itself must sound like.

Tithes and offerings were collected separately during the service, tithes collected first in a manner that is similar to our western churches, and offerings collected afterwards in a basket placed on a podium at center before the congregation and surrounded by drums. During the collection song, men beat upon the drums with eyes lifted upwards, lost in worship as a line formed that gradually encircled the entire congregation. Men, women, and children alike eagerly, and in turn, set their financial contributions into the offering basket, singing, dancing, and twirling back to their seats with hands lifted high.

*“Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”*  
—2 Corinthians 9:7 (ESV)

During the service, our team was invited to lead the congregation in a song, and after introducing ourselves, we gleefully sang “This is the Day that the Lord has Made.” The congregation stood to its feet and joined along with lifted voices and much clapping. Bryan was then invited to give a short message through one of our translators, and he offered to the Burkinabé pastor, elders, and entire congregation an uplifting word that

the presence of the church in Burkina Faso will transform and establish the entire nation, and will ultimately be a blessing to the entire continent of Africa. Pastor Bryan reaffirmed the necessity of “worshiping with determination” in the face of persistent obstacles and struggle, and told the people that Satan was diligent in attempting to obstruct and deny our travel to come see them and give them this very message of hope and edification from God Himself.

Following the service, we entered the staff’s offices to exchange gifts and pray over the church pastor, the elders, and staff. I had the beautiful opportunity to hold a small baby girl, who

reminded me of my baby girl all the way back home in America. Once again, our Father was showing me the power of prayer, as I prayed over this baby and joined in on praying over the pastor, elders, head of the project’s CSP, and later this afternoon over two of our Compassion translators, Samuel and Lompo—who worked together on the van yesterday to translate my first two letters to Myriam and Fatimata from English into Mooré! What an incredible, uplifting, and transformative experience. These people



*Holding a beautiful, sleepy baby girl.*

are sons and daughters of our Father in Heaven, and they are my brothers and sisters in Christ. I know that I will be praying for them, each by name, when I return to America! I finally understand why the Apostle Paul greets so many people by name in Romans 16.



*The children posing in front of Matthew 11:28.*

This afternoon, we returned briefly to the hotel to refresh and then headed to the local market for a quick hour of shopping and purchasing gifts crafted

by Burkinabé artisans. Our day concluded with an edifying, reflective (and very teary-eyed) dGroup session in which we took Communion as a team and discussed how God has been strengthening our faith and speaking into our lives through this trip. It is incredible not only to unpack my own experiences thus far during this short, but highly emotional time in Burkina, but to hear of how God has been building the faith of the other people on this mission trip. We have all been mightily blessed by perceiving the hand of God Himself on our dear brothers and sisters in Christ here in Burkina Faso, those who are poor in the world, but chosen by our Father to be “rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom” (James 2:5).

## DAY 5 | 13 November 2017

Today was my final day in Burkina Faso on this mission trip, and it was a special one— Sponsor Day, in which the team’s sponsored children from all across Burkina Faso came to spend half the day with their sponsors at Loumbila Beach amusement park northeast of Ouagadougou. For me, it was my third opportunity on this trip (incredible) to spend time with little Myriam and Fatimata before starting the arduous trek back home to the U.S. later tonight.

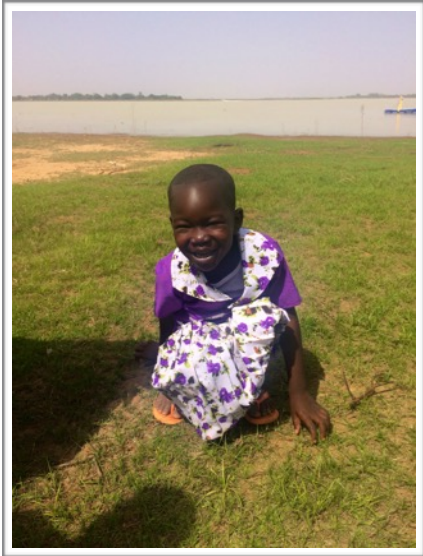
As our van was pulling onto the road leading into the park, we stopped to let the kids from BF 0404 transfer from their van onto ours for the final leg of the trip. Myriam and Fatimata climbed aboard with their chaperon, Germaine (the woman who is the head of health and safety at BF 0404), and sat down together next to me. As we pulled into the parking lot of the amusement park, I couldn’t help but think that the scene before my eyes looked something akin to the setting



*With Myriam (left) and Fatimata (right) at the park.*

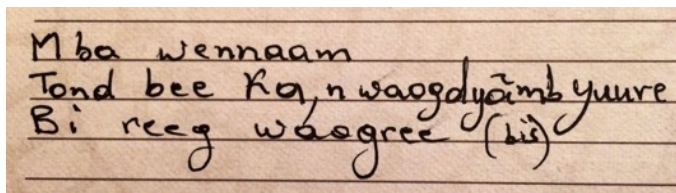


for a zombie apocalypse movie—worn-down by American standards, music echoing on loudspeakers across the deserted and dilapidated park, but for most (if not all) of our sponsored children, a venue for fun that they have likely never known of, nor thought possible. I cringed at the thought of spoiled children playing in waterparks back home.



*Fatimata is called "worshiper."*

The park sits adjacent to a sprawling lake, and the first activity with the children was to go on a speedboat ride on this lake. Susan and I donned floatation vests and climbed aboard with our children, and watched the amusement on their faces as they surveyed the watery expanse, oft catching droplets of water cast onto their faces by the waves. Given that the average temperature in Burkina Faso has been over 100 degrees F, this boat ride was a relaxing and refreshing activity. When we returned to shore, our small group sat in a circle near the water's edge with our translator for the day, Andrew, and we all listened as the joyous Fatimata sang for us a praise song in her petite voice:



**Father God**

**We are standing here to praise your Name**

**Be glorified**

Afterwards, Myriam and Fatimata and I went about the park with our translator, riding a large merry-go-round with airborne capsules that move up and down while moving in a circle, riding in bumper cars (we had a particularly rough collision that nearly injured me and Fatimata), taking pictures with one another, and racing each other down a series of slides. Although Fatimata grinned and laughed as she was running around, Myriam was much more shy and reserved, showing rarely even the glint of a smile throughout the day. Andrew spoke with her often, however, and assured me that she was having much fun, even though she was tired because it was a scorching day (I can't say I blame her!).

After lunch and a time of conversing and asking questions of Myriam and Fatimata via

Andrew, during which I was given a glimpse into their daily lives, their families, and the people with whom they live (taking copious notes, of course, for my reference when I will be writing letters to them stateside), I brought over my gifts to give to them under the shade of a cabana. Before the trip, I filled a backpack with school supplies, hygiene items, household goods, a teddy bear, and a baseball cap, and I brought it with me all the way from the U.S. to give to my future sponsored child. When I decided to sponsor these two best friends, however, Leland and Veronica helped me to split this backpack into two gift bags for the girls, which I presented them much to their surprise and great enjoyment. With great care, they unpacked their bags, inspecting



*Fatimata enjoying sunglasses and the Tennessee cap in her gift bag.*



*Myriam and Fatimata were excited to receive the handmade dresses.*

every individual item with looks of wonder in their eyes. When I showed them two dresses handmade by a ministry in Santa Cruz, CA, the overflow of Fatimata's joy caused her to break into dancing!

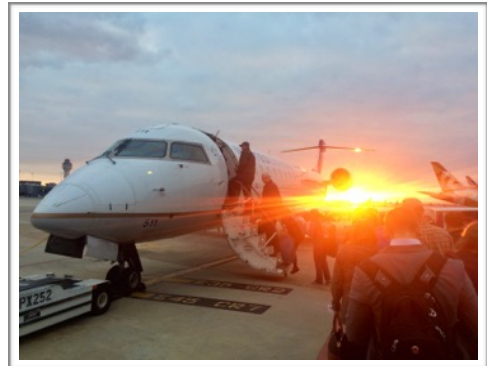
As the Sponsor Day began winding down, I asked Myriam and Fatimata if I could pray over them, and prayed a prayer of blessing, provision, and spiritual covering over them and their families. The sizable cadre of mission team members, Compassion translators, the sponsored children, and their families and/or chaperones began congregating around the entrance to the park to take group photos and say our final goodbyes (rather, "see you soon's"). I spoke words of encouragement to

Amidou, the director of BF 0404, and said my last farewells to Andrew, Timothee, and Samuel, our translators and brothers in Christ. On humble, bended knee, I gave a hug to Myriam and Fatimata (now visibly upset by my

departure), and told them that I would write them soon. And with that, the van pulled away, and we were off, back to the hotel to prepare for our night flights out of Burkina Faso. A bittersweet departure, indeed, and I am melancholy even writing these words.

## BACK AT HOME | 14 November 2017

I have arrived safely back on U.S. soil after the lengthy journey home—6 hours in the air from Ouagadougou, a 7-hour layover in Brussels, 8.5 hours to Washington, D.C., and a final hour-long hop back to Nashville (where my wife and baby have been staying with my in-laws). Now, that's over 22 hours of travel back home, and although I'm exhausted and jet-lagged, I am incredibly grateful to the Lord for all He has shown me on this trip. My soul magnifies Him as cherished memories and experiences from this trip percolate in my mind. The smiling faces of the Burkinabé children are seared onto my heart, and I already miss them tremendously—even though we just left them, as evidenced by the fresh reddish dust adorning the soles of my tennis shoes.



*One last ride on the journey home, with a very fitting sunset backdrop.*

It is difficult to find the right words to convey the depth of impact that this mission trip has had on my spiritual growth as a young Christian, and on the condition of my heart. I witnessed firsthand the life-giving impact of the \$38/month Compassion sponsorship. I looked at abject, third-world poverty directly in the eyes, and watched as it stripped away hope and dignity from the heart of man. And yet, in this weary environment, the Kingdom of God is advancing, as I write now with tears in my eyes—Christ is building His church in Burkina Faso, and the gates of hell will never prevail against it. God gave me a momentary glimpse into the next life in His Kingdom, showing me the power of worshipful prayer, the fellowship of believers, and transcendent brotherhood in Christ, with Christ, and for Christ. He showed me that I need to love the people in Virginia as much as I love the Burkinabé people, preaching the Gospel wherever the Spirit leads.



He showed me through these children that I am but a child before our Father, one who is dependent on Him alone, one who would cling tightly to Jesus if He were to walk by.

A piece of my heart is over there in Burkina Faso, and I cannot wait for the opportunity to return and experience another glimpse of heaven on earth, the Kingdom advancing here and now by the hands and feet of Christ Jesus in that place. To Him be all honor, glory, and praise! May His Kingdom have no end, and may the Name of our Lord Jesus be lifted high across the nation of Burkina Faso and the entire African continent. Amen!

*“And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’”*

—Matthew 28:18–20 (ESV)



*Sponsor Day photo with brothers and sisters in Christ—a glimpse of the Kingdom on earth.*



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