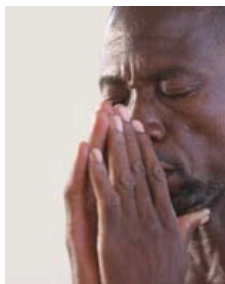


Inner strength

Living with AIDS, trusting in God



by Brenda Jansen, SIM Malawi

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Henry greeted me warmly and welcomed me into his living room, eager to share his story. The sincerity in his eyes and the gestures of his hands, often placed on his chest as he spoke, told me that this would be no ordinary visit. What he would describe to me about living with AIDS, losing his precious wife, and struggling to support his two teenage children, would understandably bring about hopelessness and despair. But as I listened, I observed something very different.

The ambitious life that he'd known throughout his adult years, including working as an insurance salesman, running a mini-bus/taxi business, owning a butcher shop, and playing piano in a classy hotel, suddenly changed.

He grew very sick, having fevers that wouldn't go away, becoming weaker by the day. The fevers puzzled the doctors. His brother then suggested that he seek help at the Partners in Hope Medical Centre. It was soon discovered that he was HIV positive, and that he was suffering from tuberculosis (TB). He was admitted to a hospital to undergo TB treatment for one month.

While in the hospital, with his wife at his bedside every day, he grew even weaker. This was partly due to the sores that lined his throat (a common symptom of AIDS), making it painful to swallow even water and a thin porridge. He remembers his weakness and laboured breathing, making it impossible for him to even sit up in bed. His wife feared for his life.

But God, appearing to Henry in a vision, had given him assurance that he would not die then. He clung to this hope with confidence, trusting completely in the Lord he had come to know and love deeply. Over that month, all of the other patients in his hospital room died. Others were admitted in their places, and they died as well. Still, Henry held on to the words that Jesus had given him.

He was later discharged to his home, still extremely weak. He depended on his wife's help for the very basic needs of daily living, even carrying him on her back to take him to the outside toilet at their home. But, sadly, she died very suddenly due to a heart problem. The day she died, family members brought her body from the hospital back to the house.

Too weak to walk, Henry had to be carried to the side of her coffin to look in at her face, saying his last goodbyes. He experienced intense grief in the months to follow, but he trusted that the Lord had purpose in this, that he would bring something good from her death. The tears in his eyes as he spoke of her revealed his love and his pain.

Deep joy and gratitude

As time went on and Henry continued his HIV treatment, he became healthier. However, his legs remained very weak. His doctor could not promise that this would improve.

Henry encouraged him, saying that he trusted the Lord to make him strong again. Only a month later, he was walking. And today he walks long distances, even 7 or 8 kilometres at a time!

Henry's deep joy and gratitude for God's personal touch on his life were contagious, as he recalled some of the ways God has provided for his needs. He says that he is free from worry and fear, a result of fully surrendering his life to Jesus. His desire and prayer is to share his faith and hope with other Malawians, people living in villages who despair about their future.

There is a unique peace about Henry, something that few people experience. His small physical frame betrays his inner strength. As I listened and observed, it was evident that this man is not dying from AIDS. No, he's living with AIDS ... really living.

0 comments

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Pray

- That people living with HIV and AIDS will know the almighty God, who is full of compassion, and who gives true comfort.
- That they will experience good health and protection from opportunistic diseases.
- That they will live wisely.

