



God is directing me to go to Uganda [June 2013 - July 2014]...

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.”

Joshua 1:9

Well, it seems God is giving me a new command, along with the same promise he gave Joshua: that He will be with me wherever I go.

Let me back up a little bit so that I can help you understand how I've been led to this conclusion...

Several years ago, some friends of mine, Matt & Crystal Kehn, moved to Uganda to work with Juna Amagara Ministries (JAM). (Juna Amagara means *saving lives* in the local language.) As I watched them go, prayed for their growing family, and stayed updated through their blog, a desire to see what God was doing there grew within me. I had the Kehn family prayer card in my classroom my first year of teaching, and told my students that someday I would visit them in Uganda. About five years later I finally decided to pursue it. My plan was to spend a month experiencing life with them. God had different plans. I ended up co-leading a team of 10 people for two weeks, then staying

another three weeks with one of my teammates.

I will never forget the day I sat in on the ABIDE* program. It stirred in my heart a desire that is just now becoming a reality.



*Amagara Bible Institute for Discipleship & Evangelism



ABIDE

In 2008, Matt Kehn began a new branch of JAM by piloting the ABIDE program. Young men are given the opportunity after graduating from high school to pursue an intensive 6-month program with the purpose of equipping them in studying and applying God's Word, mentoring them in life decisions, and sending them to serve Christ in the Church and in their community. Over the years over 50 men have graduated from the program. In 2013, JAM will pilot its first ABIDE program for young women. Lord-willing, I will be serving on staff during this new chapter in ABIDE history.

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The steps in the journey...

So, that day I sat in on the ABIDE classes became a pivotal day for me. As I sat in the corner of the classroom, hearing these young men hungry to learn more and more about God's Word and the direction it offers for their lives, I had one thought running through my mind: *They need this for girls.*

Immediately I began wondering if such a program was something I might be able to be involved in. I didn't think too seriously about it at first. But the possibility did come up in conversation more than once before I returned home from 5 weeks in Uganda.

When I came back to my family, friends, home, and work in Illinois, my heart didn't completely return with me. Despite various experiences on short-term mission trips in the past, I was not prepared for what God was doing in my heart and mind in regards to this African country that I had just encountered. Almost everyone around me could see I was not the same. I would constantly find myself subconsciously planning my return to Uganda. But it wasn't just planning for another short-term trip...While I was brushing my teeth or loading the dishwasher I would catch myself thinking things like, *If I was to move to Uganda, could I handle sporadic electricity? When I live in Uganda I will need to learn how to cook basic Ugandan foods like chapattis and g-nut sauce.* Additionally, any time I considered buying anything new, I would immediately find myself evaluating the decision based on whether or not I would take it to Uganda with me. Where were these

thoughts coming from? What was I to do with them?

Well, I wasn't sure exactly, so I got back into my American routine as best as I could. Of course, I began planning another short-term trip the following summer for 6 weeks. During those 6 weeks I had several conversations with different Ugandans, including ABIDE alumni, about hopes for a girls' program.

This past fall I received an update on the plans for the Girls' ABIDE...

By this time I was more than aware that Matt was hoping to begin the girls' program in 2013. However, I figured it would run the same time as the boys' program: January-July. As much as I wanted to be a part of it, I didn't see quitting my job as a high school teacher in the middle of the year as a possibility. But the newsletter shared that they had decided to run the pilot program from July-December. That got my attention.

I immediately began sending emails with questions, praying for God's direction, and talking with good friends and pastors about the possibility of joining the staff. As I began inquiring, I became uncertain about being the right fit for the job...God has given me gifts and experiences that align with ABIDE, but I know it will stretch me in many ways. Yet, I decided it was probably best that I didn't feel 100% qualified, keeping my pride in check. JAM has enthusiastically encouraged me to pursue being on the ABIDE team for 2013.

Uganda, here I come!

The many aspects of this adventure...

1. I requested a one-year leave of absence from my job as a high school teacher.

The opportunity to take a leave-of-absence seemed like God's way of helping me to see that He wants me to go. Making the dream a reality has been a journey of obedience!

2. I will co-lead a short-term team from Village Bible Church in June. Like I have now done twice before, I will be a part of a team from my church involved in orphan care & evangelism in Uganda.

3. July - December I will work with the Girls ABIDE pilot.

During the pilot program, I plan to live in the ABIDE house with the students, developing God-centered relationships, as we explore what it means to abide in Christ (John 15).

4. January - July I will continue as ABIDE staff.

My role during these months will be depend on whether or not a 2nd girls' ABIDE begins simultaneously as the guys' program. Either way, there will be work to be done amongst the staff.

5. I need to raise \$1,500/month During my 13 months in Uganda, my expenses will vary, but they average out to \$1,500/month. I know I don't have much time to raise this much money, but I am confident that if God wants me to go, He will provide.

Want to get involved?

To make a donation (one time or monthly gifts):

Send in the enclosed form. **OR** Go to www.amagara.org.

- Click on **Donations**.
- Find **Missionary Support**.
- Enter the amount.
- Type **Lisa O'Brien** to the right.
- Follow the additional prompts as directed.

Thanks for your support!