

## LET US FIX OUR EYES ON JESUS

**Hebrews 12:2 “fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. “**

First of all, we praise and thank God who richly blessed our 2022 East African Regional Bible Conference which took place from 23-25 September. The conference was mainly hosted at our UBF Makerere Student Centre. This conference was the first hybrid conference held in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Delegates from Kenya and Ethiopia were able to join online through zoom while attendants from across the world joined using the zoom link provided. In Uganda, different delegates gathered from Ethiopia (1), Kenya, Uganda (53), Germany (4), South Korea (2), USA (2) and Rwanda (31). We were moved by the attitude of the students from Rwanda who travelled 500km (either way) by bus to come to the conference. Although they had many challenges on the way, God delivered them safely and used Msn. Daniel and Deborah Yang to serve them fully. This conference was mainly organised by native leaders in Uganda and Kenya who co-worked to develop the conference theme, program and selection of messengers. The conference was also attended by the UBF General Director Pr. Ron and Dervilla Ward whose presence was a source of encouragement to the attending delegates.

We started with pre-conference activities to prepare our hearts for the main conference. We listened to two powerful testimonies from Betty (Rwanda) and Pascal (Rwanda). Betty lived her life as a restless soul who had lost zeal for life because of her troubled upbringing in a single-mum family. Out of many struggles, she met Jesus in UBF and is currently serving two students. Pascal shared extensively about his early life struggles and how God helped him enter the prestigious Cornerstone Leadership Academy in Rwanda. He could feel God's choosing through these and many other revelations. He is now serving faithfully in University of Rwanda. The opening message was delivered by Sh. Ambrose who works as a university professor. His message was titled: “Let us rebuild the Wall of Christ” taken from Nehemiah 2:18-19, reminded us that in order to remain safe, secure and steadfast in the kingdom service, we must have our inner spiritual walls intact. Through the message, he reminded us that East Africa is privileged to have received Africa's first missionaries including the first UBF missionary to the African continent in 1989! Although many of our campus walls seem to be broken due to the COVID-19 pandemic so we need to urgently rebuild through student outreach, sacrifice and devotion. He reminded us that every spiritual rebuilding work begins and ends with Christ!

The next day (24th) we listened to main Lecture 1 titled” “Let us Fix Our Eyes on Jesus” taken from Hebrews 12:1-12. This was delivered by Sh. Fredrick Odhiambo who encouraged us to run the spiritual race with Jesus through perseverance by removing all that hinders us. After spending many years fixing his eyes on financial resources and worldly success and making fraudulent claims from his employer, he struggled to get clear focus on Jesus. Instead he

focused on how to get rich by any means possible. However, Jesus trained him through some health diagnosis and family tragedy. Through these events, he could experience the power of perseverance while fixing my eyes on Jesus in a practical manner. After the message. We listened to a life testimony by Sh. Davis from Kenya UBF. After living as unrepentant for many years, he finally accepted 2Tim 2:21 as God's special instrument of noble purpose of campus ministry.

In the evening, we had a panel discussion on "Understanding the needs of Bible students in the post COVID-19 campus". We could agree that the use of technology is providing new opportunities to meet and share with many more "digital sheep". We were encouraged by Msn. Daniel who serves more than 25 students every week through online bible study. We praised God for enabling us to embrace technology but also share with our bible students physically whenever its possible. We also had a presentation on the "Spirituality of the Cross" by Msn. David Kim, the UBF World Mission director. He shared the spirituality of the cross as weakness, as goodness and as witness. We could learn that knowing the meaning of the cross deepens our spirituality. He challenged us to have a deep personal relationship with the cross of Jesus. When he avoided taking up his cross of mission, he was miserable. However, when he took the cross of Jesus, God blessed him to experience heavenly joy, peace, and eternal life.

The main lecture 2 was delivered by Sh. Julius Ecuru of Kyambogo University Chapter who shared a message from Mathew 28:16-20 titled: "Therefore God and Make Disciples of all nations". Through the message, we were able to renew our commitment to campus mission and to be witnesses of Jesus in all campuses. The call to make disciples of all nations in Africa was renewed especially in this season when our ministry is transitioning to native leaders. After the message, Sh. Eyerusalem from Ethiopia who works as a resident doctor shared a moving testimony titled: "I was lost, but now I am found!" She lived as an unhappy child especially after losing her father in a motor accident. Because of this, she slowly slid into depression and had to take medication for a mental condition. However, God called her through bible study and she could accept to live as a shepherdess. Now she serves students with God's word through sacrificial living.

Pastor Ron Ward gave a closing address. Using Joshua 1:7 as a guiding key verse, he encouraged native leaders and missionaries to be strong and courageous in order to spread the gospel across Africa. He proclaimed: "Our Mighty God can do great things in our own generation. Let's see the vision of world salvation through campus ministry". Indeed, all delegates were challenged by God's six-fold message to Joshua: Be Strong and Courageous! We could plant the hope to raise new generation of leaders, strengthen cross-cultural mission and to reach every campus and nation for Christ in this generation. Pastor Ron will be also be attending three other conferences in Southern, Western and Northern Africa.

Through the conference, we could renew our faith and heart for UBF in the East African Region. The exuberant praise and worship, the extended fellowship sessions were useful in helping us a have a shared vision for UBF in Africa. From this conference, we thank God for raising 3 strong messengers among East African leaders and for especially sending over 31 students from Rwanda. We saw them as the fruits of many years of service by missionaries and shepherds. We thank God who moved the heart of Sh. Venueste to make decision of faith to live as a shepherd. We praise and thank God who has helped us to bear much fruit for the last 33 years

inspite of our weaknesses and shortcomings. We deeply thank you for your love and prayer support for this conference. We request for your continuing prayer support especially for native leaders to be active in our ministry. May the Lord continue to bless UBF in the East African region to continue to pray and engage in one to one discipleship ministry so that we may pioneer many campuses across the region through the Gospel of Jesus in our generation.

One Word: Rebuild in Jesus