



A Change of Plans

by Jaime Saint

Two years ago, as our vehicle was finishing a trek from Jos to Abuja in Nigeria, my phone showed some troubling information. The words 'flight canceled' read loud and clear in a red block on the top of the screen.

The night before we embarked on the four-hour drive to the Abuja airport our team received an email warning us of activity around the Abuja airport. There was an apparent travel advisory for dangerous activity in and around the terminal. While risk is an inherent part of air travel and the work ITEC does abroad, it is rather ominous when preemptive warnings show up in our inbox.

If you've never been to Africa and experienced a flight cancellation, it's not like being in Atlanta. The ticketing agent doesn't have three other flights that day to fit you on. There is a real possibility that your evening flight cancellation will set you back 12-24 hours. With dirty clothes in our suitcases after 10 days on the ground, our mildly homesick team was ready to be home. We didn't have much to lose at this point, so our team continued to the airport to sort out our options.

Our world, and specifically our nation, received an ominous warning about COVID-19 months ago. But we've been warned about new viruses like this before. The media has a way of blowing things like this out of proportion, preying on the fear of the public. In the beginning, it seemed like we had a logical reason not to be worried. Then things started to progress, the virus began to spread, and just like the warning email we received in Nigeria, there seemed to be a real threat.

The past six weeks have felt somewhat similar to our team's four-hour drive from Jos to Abuja. We have been driving, full throttle, towards this pandemic. I have felt a wide range of emotions throughout this time, from initial denial and dismissal to a more balanced perspective today. We are facing a formidable challenge as a human race. Our collective plans for the spring and early summer have been postponed, and just like our small team approaching the Abuja airport with a security warning and canceled flight, we have a decision to make. Do we walk into the 'hopeless' and 'dangerous' situation prayerfully trusting God, or do we retreat?

Due to domestic and international travel restrictions, the ITEC team has been forced to postpone upcoming travel. These are the cards that have been dealt to us. We also made the decision on March 30 to ask our staff to work from home. Then, Florida issued a lockdown beginning on April 3. However, our team is not going to retreat. We are working hard, first and foremost, on asking God what he has for us

in this season of the 'unexpected' and 'unforeseen.' We are desiring, as a staff, to react appropriately (not in fear) to the information we have. In light of our staff quarantine, we aim to maintain the hope, optimism, and humble submission in prayer that allows God to use us during challenging times. As believers, we all must suit up with Romans 8:31, and similar truths, daily.



ITEC Team meeting remotely for prayer.

In Abuja, our small team ventured through the 'travel advisory' area, and we walked up to the ticket counter. Initially, it seemed like there was no hope. There was no crew and no departing partner flights. Per the instructions of the agent, we waited in the terminal for an hour, passing the time playing cards. Then, they called us up to the counter and shared with us that they had placed us on a non-partner flight for no charge, and we would leave in an hour! What beautiful and unexpected news.

Our world, our nation, and our communities are facing challenges. How we respond will define this time for us. As believers, we must look to the Scriptures for guidance, humbling ourselves in prayer before our almighty God. This season is a part of God's plan, and while the prognosis looks grim, our hope is so much greater. It's so amazing that we can 'play cards' in the storm, waiting for God to reveal what He has for all of us during this challenging time. Yes, there will be loss, challenge, hardship, and destruction. But that, too, was foretold in Scripture. We can take heart because this world is not our home!

Instead of retreating, let's use this opportunity to grow closer to God and point more people to the hope we have in Him. Just like our team was delivered from an unfortunate situation in Abuja, I believe that the light and momentary affliction we are experiencing is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison (2 Corinthians 4:16-18).

April Coronavirus Update

As our team has contemplated our response to this pandemic, there have been many difficult choices. However, there have also been decisions that have simply been decided for us. Postponing trips has, for the most part, become more of an exercise in yielding to government regulations and border closures, than an internal debate. At the very least, we are grateful for this clarity even though it has meant changing our plans.

As you read on the front, the vast majority of the ITEC team is working from home. While we all long to be together, this season has yielded some unique opportunities. We are excitedly focusing on and discussing how we might progress equipping initiatives during this time. Having time freed up from postponed travel has allowed us to explore how we might replicate the training we do overseas.

Members of our engineering team are also exploring ways to use their expertise to help the medical community in our region. You may know of the great need for personal protective equipment (PPE) worldwide. Our team of engineers has been exploring approved designs and seeing how they can use 3D printers and other equipment to help the healthcare workers on the front lines.

While we are burdened by the lives lost and impact from this horrible virus in our own country, our team can't help but think about our partners and the countries we work with overseas. In challenging contexts overseas there are many people who are suffering greatly. There are food shortages and very strict quarantine policies that are contributing to tremendous struggles. We ask for you to continue praying for the nations, and for believers in these places, during this time. The ITEC team has been encouraged to hear reports from former students during this global pandemic who are using the skills we passed on to them. In many ways, the current situation we are in (unable to travel and directly assist them) points to the great need to equip the indigenous church to meet needs in their communities to open doors to the Gospel! Thank you for continuing to pray for and support our team and partners through this time.

The First Farming Training!



Check out this video featuring the first ITEC Farming training this past January in East Africa. This video was made by an ITEC volunteer interested in learning our Film training techniques!

<http://bit.ly/firstfarm>

Upcoming Trips

Please join us in praying for these trips.

- Western Africa- POSTPONED
I-FARM
- East Africa - POSTPONED
I-DENT
- Ecuador - POSTPONED
I-FIX
- Southeast Asia - June 2020
I-FIX, I-MED & Physical Therapy
- UK - June 2020
Speaking Tour
- Ecuador - July 2020
I-DENT
- East Africa - September 2020
I-FILM, I-FIX, I-SEE
- Southeast Asia - October 2020
I-FILM, I-FIX

PLANNING STAGE

- Europe - Fall 2020
Trauma Counseling, I-FILM

Josh McDowell Podcast

On the last episode of Mission Minded we were honored to have best selling author Josh McDowell. Josh McDowell has been at the forefront of cultural trends and groundbreaking ministry for more than 50 years.

<http://bit.ly/joshmcd>



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