



FAR REACHING MINISTRIES



GATHERING HURRICANE

Winston Churchill talked of the coming of World War II with Adolf Hitler's Third Reich as a gathering storm. The signs were not vague about Hitler's intentions for the conquest of Europe. Even today, the people who always want peace constantly ignore what should be evident to everyone. In our generation, we cannot even call a terrorist, a terrorist.

Yet in South Sudan, we have a gathering hurricane that is about to hit the nation. Starvation will come this year, and some say that millions will die. Hunger is already having an

effect and driving some men mad with desperation. Men, who under normal circumstances would be okay, have now become criminals because of what is unfolding.

**"JESUS SAID THAT TO
THE LEVEL YOU FORGIVE,
IS TO THE LEVEL YOU
WILL BE FORGIVEN."**

In our village, we have gone from feeding 6,000 children a day to feeding 14,000 children a day, and there is no end in sight. I have had to tell many of our chaplains to send their families to refugee camps, until this war is under control.

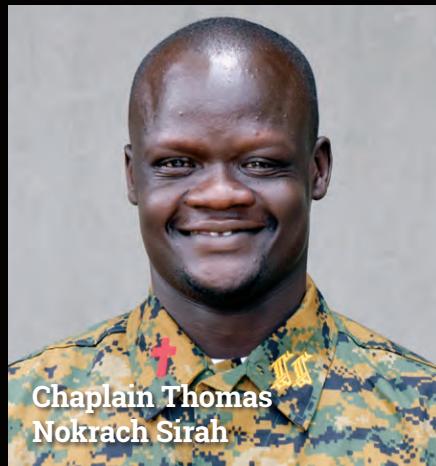
We just cannot provide for and protect everyone under these circumstances.



It was the twelfth of May, and I had just returned from overseas. What started out to be a nice day, quickly became the worst day of my life. It was about 10:30 in the morning, and I was discussing building repairs with Emily, my assistant, when a call came in from South Sudan. It was my wife, Vicky. She said that Thomas, one of our staff chaplains, had just been reported shot. The other staff chaplains were on their way to find out what happened. I quickly called Michael, who was en-route to the hospital, and he said that Thomas was still breathing. My mind immediately went into action about how to get a plane in the air, with a doctor, to get Thomas.

When I called Michael back to arrange the details, I asked if there was a doctor, on the ground, who could immediately tend to Thomas. I also asked Michael where the bullet entered and where it exited, and what the wound looked like to better understand Thomas' condition to get him stabilized. At first, Michael began answering all my questions. Then, I heard what I did not want to hear most. He said, "Sir, Thomas is dead."

The words hit me with such great force that it took my breath away. I finally understood what people mean when they say that it hurts so much that it is hard to breathe. I felt that I had just been kicked in the chest by a horse, and not just any horse, this was a great stallion. Of the 500 men under my command, Thomas was the third closest to me. Thomas had a wife, Sara, a three-year-old boy, named Forgiven (whom we all call Given), and a baby girl. Thomas' little boy, Given, loves me more than I can explain. Both, Thomas and Sara have said that Given loves Wes more than anyone else.



**Chaplain Thomas
Nokrach Sirah**



Thomas and Sara

That little three-year-old would leave his house in the morning, and walk a half mile through the village to come see me. Often, I would open my door at 6 a.m. to find him standing there waiting for me. He wouldn't knock, he would just wait until I came out. He always wants me to hold him and carry him. He'll even sit in my lap and eat breakfast with me in the morning. Even when I teach on a Sunday morning, he'll walk up to the front of the church for me to pick him up. And, when I do, he'll fall asleep on my shoulder while I teach the message. Thomas and Sara, the first few times Given snuck out, were

frantic looking for him. They came to the compound to get help, only to be told that he was with me. Now, when he goes missing, it is known where he can be found.

Thomas was an incredible Godly man and a commando in the South Sudan Army. He was in countless enemy engagements, where he could have easily been killed, but he survived all. In one of these engagements, his unit was attacked by a large enemy force and they were locked in a fierce battle. Lino, who is also a senior chaplain, and another man named Richard, were fighting for the lives of the entire unit when Richard's rifle jammed. He told Thomas that his weapon would not fire. Thomas told him, "Just lay down." Richard responded and said, "But, there are many of them." Thomas replied, "But, there are also many with us." Then, Lino and Thomas started to laugh themselves silly because they thought it was so funny that Richard

was scared. These men were fearless in the face of danger, even during a very fierce fire fight.



Thomas (front and center) with children at a Love Covers event

The night that Thomas was killed, he was called upon while he was at the base, to go and help resolve a family dispute. There was a question about a man owing a dowry for his wife. In Sudan, men pay for the right to marry and this can often cost as many as 300 cows. What the problem was, I do not truly know. All seemed to be going well when the husband, who was in dispute with the family, showed up drunk with a AK-47. He walked in, and as Thomas was trying to understand the problem, he just shot Thomas. Then, the husband turned and took off. We later found out that this drunk husband, who was also a soldier, thought another man was sleeping with his wife. When he saw Thomas, in his drunken stupor, he mistook him for the other man.

We captured the husband the next day, and he is being held at the army barracks prison awaiting trial. He will most likely be shot in a firing squad. When our chaplains went to see him, they said that he wept over the mistake saying, "I am sorry. I did not mean to kill Thomas." Michael, our senior chaplain, said that they realized he was not in the right frame of mind and they even felt pity for him.

The next day, there was a viewing for Thomas, and the compound was filled with people who loved him.

They came by the hundreds. You could hear the wailing of grief-stricken women everywhere. The following day, he was taken to his village to be buried. Little Given would see his dad one last time before he was lowered into the ground.

When I first heard what happened, I wanted to say, "Hold the man who did this until I get there, I want to kill him myself." Now, you may say, "Wes, you're not serious?" But, folks I am. I have always had it in me, the ability to take human life, if it was necessary. But this is where becoming a new creature in Christ must change everything about our lives. We no longer belong to ourselves, we belong to Christ. The old must die so that the new can be born. And, what is most difficult for me is to forgive. Jesus said that to the level you forgive, is to the level you will be forgiven.

See, what you need to understand is that Thomas was a son to me in as much as one who is not born of your own flesh, can be a son. I watched this man grow from being young in Christ to an incredible mature man of God. He used to travel with Vicky and do security when she was doing the women's ministry. He was so proud and thankful to be a part of it. He never saw it as below him. I remember that it was only two weeks

FEEDING OF THE FOURTEEN THOUSAND



With the collapse of the economy in South Sudan, hunger has become a real problem. We have witnessed a great number of people leaving the country daily. Close to half the population, in our village of Nimule, have left their homes and have gone to refugee camps in Uganda. Because of this situation, Far Reaching Ministries has made the decision to provide one meal a day of beans and corn maize to all the local schoolchildren in Nimule, South Sudan. This will be a large enough meal to get them through the day. Most people only eat once or twice a day, so this is normal for them.

Since we began this life-saving project in February, the need has become so great that our staff is now feeding 14,000 children. This cost is well over \$50,000 a month, but we are determined that no child goes to bed hungry. To provide this blessing, we are asking the Body of Christ to come along side with a financial gift. This is also a perfect opportunity to demonstrate God's love in a very tangible way. Please indicate "FEEDING 14,000" on the enclosed gift card, along with your donation. Jesus fed the five thousand, but He said to the disciples that you will do even greater works.

WIDOW'S HOME



When our chaplains have fought the good fight to the end, laying down their lives so others might live, it is their families who suffer their death the most. This is an opportunity for God's people to help the widows and families of these fallen chaplains. We are building homes for these families who have lost everything. These will not be western style built houses—just bricks, cement and a metal roof. Each house will consist of two rooms with a causeway between the rooms. These homes will be a great blessing to widows and their children, as most people in South Sudan

live in a mud hut with a thatched roof.

Each home is about \$5,000, which is more than they would ever be able to afford. To be part of blessing these families, please indicate "WIDOW'S HOME" on the enclosed gift card with your donation. Please join us in prayer as these women take on the monumental task of raising a family on their own.

earlier that I was looking at him in his office doing administrative work and I felt so proud of the man that he had become. My only regret is that I did not walk in and give him, what would have been, my last hug.

When Thomas died, I had not shed a tear in almost 40 years. I did not even know if I had the ability to do it anymore. Working in a war zone, I learned to internalize emotion many years ago—I was a soldier. But, for the first time in many years, I mourned. Even the sound of it was strange to me. I had forgotten what this sounded like. It was quiet, but it was there.

These next years will be extremely difficult. We are going to be in the path of the hurricane, as more and more people become hungry. There are two things in poor countries that have been shown to bring civil war and unrest: children dying and hunger. Our land has all the precursors, as the most war-torn country in Africa.

With each passing chaplain, I have grown weary. I long for heaven where I will see my sons again.

Wes Bentley

Wes Bentley

Far Reaching Ministries

For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

~ II Corinthians 4:11



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