

Despite the lack of running water, electricity, or phone service,
Saving Grace Children's Village compound is a place of peace in northern Uganda.
That tranquility was shattered last year by gunfire that felled two guards.

Story and Photos by Ed Compean

"Do You Fear God?"



Saving Grace missionary Mike Bobo (right) relates how he felt the Lord directed him to confront the gunmen when he feared others were in danger. "Do you fear God? Do you know that God is going to judge you for what you are doing right now?" he demanded of them.

It happened the night of October 25th, 2001 in the African bush.

"They were shooting all around the house," said Jill, one of two women trapped by gunmen. Jill Weineke and Shayna Vender hid at the foot of the bed and called on the radio, "Rob, they are shooting! What should we do?" Before a response could be offered, the radio went dead.

Pastor Rob Douglass had put his daughter to bed and was settling down for the night with his wife, Heidi. "I was not prepared for this," Pastor Rob would say later. Hearing the women but unable to respond, he sought God's guidance. Staring into the jungle that separates the four houses in the compound, he heard another series of shots and thought the worst. "I just knew they were dead."

Jill and Shayna realized that the gunmen were breaking in through the window and ran into the other bedroom. Shots began to come through the door as the lock was being blown off. The CC Saving Grace missionaries from Yorba Linda, CA, had no choice but to attempt escape through the side entrance.



Missionary Jill Weineke felt the peace of God come over her.

“We are missionaries, we are the people of God. You’ve come here and really you are coming against God.”

Dashing out the door barefoot, they expected a hail of gunfire. They hid under the Land Rover, thankful that no shots had been fired. Later they realized their feet were cut. “We didn’t know where we were going, we were just running. I kept saying over and over in my mind, ‘Lord save us, Lord save us,’” said Jill.

As Jill began to pray for her other team members in the compound, it became clear that she needed to pray for the gunmen that had shot her friends and were robbing her house. A peace came over her. Witnessing a shooting, clad in nightclothes, being bitten by African army ants, gunmen robbing her home, and her friends possibly being killed, Jill said, “At that time, it was the most peaceful I think I have ever felt in the presence of the Lord.”

“Right when I started to pray for the robbers, I heard Mike walk into the house and say to them, ‘What are you doing in here?’ It was like God speaking directly to the men,” said Jill.

DO YOU FEAR GOD?

The leader motioned with his AK-47 for Mike Bobo, a CC Saving Grace missionary, to come in and sit down. Upon entering the home, Mike realized the women had slipped out of the house. The leader kept demanding, “Where is your money?”

Learning that the leader’s name was Abraham, Mike would not divulge the location of any valuables. “At that point I felt that I needed to speak the truth. I said, ‘We are missionaries; we are the people of God. You’ve come here and really you are coming against God.’”

Raising his voice in confidence, Mike asked Abraham and his band the toughest question yet, “Do you fear God? Do you know that God is going to judge you for what you are doing right now?”

Mike sensed that his questions had struck deep within Abraham. The gunman was silent.



Jill Weineke ministers in a medical clinic in the Kiryandongo Refugee Camp upon returning to Saving Grace Children’s Village after the attack.



Women line up at the feeding center sponsored by Far Reaching Ministries in the Kiryandongo Refugee Camp.



Rob Douglass is pastor of Saving Grace Children’s Village in Uganda. They minister to refugees fleeing war in the Sudan.

They ordered Mike to sit in the house while they robbed it, but Mike’s words had obviously changed the situation. Mike confidently walked out of the house and into the night.

Though at peace, Jill could hear the robbers leaving the house, heading in the direction of the Land Rover she and Shayna were still

The gunmen walked by the women and left. With the immediate danger over and fearing that the robbers would go house to house, Pastor Rob had made the decision to evacuate the compound.

Jill and Shayna began to administer first aid to Taban, a wounded guard. Then Mike found Umbaka in the grass. Taban had been

There was one vehicle to transport nine missionaries and two wounded guards. They would be traveling over extremely rough terrain to the nearest hospital, nearly four hours away. They feared that the gunmen could be on the road heading out of camp.

Mike said it was a very hectic scene that was only held together by God’s presence. “It was crazy, two of us had to ride on top of the vehicle and all the others were inside.”

Umbaka was very responsive and cried out in pain at every bump, but Taban was quiet and only made gurgling sounds as he bled into the vehicle. According to all accounts, the missionaries started to sense something was changing with the guards, and the ladies began to sing hymns about an hour into the drive. Even as “Amazing Grace” was being sung, it became clear to the missionaries that Taban was not going to live; his wounds were too severe.

“...remember what I said when I asked you if you feared God? Look where we are now.”

hiding under. She wondered how she was going to die. “Was it going to be torture or rape? How would I respond to that? Should I fight before I died? I just knew I would not deny Christ.”

shot through the groin and chest and was bleeding heavily. Umbaka’s arm and foot were hanging on only by skin because bullets had shattered the bones. They gently lifted the bleeding men into the Land Rover and loaded the team to evacuate.

One of the missionaries, Christian Polynard, gently held Taban and offered him an opportunity to receive Christ as his Savior. "Listen Taban, you are going to die, you are going to meet the Lord. Are you ready?"

Taban responded to accept the Lord, and a moment later he was with Jesus.

Prophetic Words

Far Reaching Ministry's Wes Bentley and CC Saving Grace's pastor Trent Douglass immediately flew to Uganda's capital to meet with their team and offer care, support, and prayer. In the days that followed the attack, all the missionaries admitted to feeling fear and wondering about God's call on their lives. After seeking God, the team is back

at the camp, ministering again to the Sudanese refugees who have fled their homeland because of genocide and slavery from the Islamic government.

The events of October 25th not only changed the lives of the guards, their families, and the nine missionaries, but also of the criminals.

During the investigation, several of the gunmen were arrested. It seemed they had targeted different relief organizations, not for ideological reasons but simply for the availability of cash. The men were responsible for at least two other murders and several robberies. Mike was asked to identify Abraham, the leader.

In the small, humid police station, Mike once again confronted Abraham.

"I looked him in the eye and said, 'Abraham, you know me, you remember what I said when I asked you if you feared God? Look where we are now.'"

Abraham's legs shook.

"It was a powerful opportunity to share what only God can do," Mike concluded. ☞

Far Reaching Ministries
(909) 677-4474
frmoffice@earthlink.net

Saving Grace Refugee Services
(714) 993-4801
Fax (714) 993-4801
savinggrace@calvarychapel.com



Mike Reese, white t-shirt, Mike Bobo, front of casket in blue, Rob Douglass, front in green, and Christian Polynard, in red, place Taban's body into the Land Rover to take to his family in the refugee camp near Saving Grace Children's Village. They are in Kampala, Uganda's capital.

Photo by Katy Polynard

The Steps of a Good Man

L.E. Romaine goes to be with the Lord

Story by Cheryl Brodersen

Just a few years ago, as Chuck Smith stood at the back door of the church greeting people after the Sunday morning message, he welcomed a new couple. The wife clarified that they were from the Midwest. They avidly listened to Chuck daily by way of the radio. She had one request. She and her husband desired to meet Chuck's wife, Romaine.

Laughing heartily, Chuck let them know in no uncertain terms that Romaine was not his wife but the infamous assistant pastor of Calvary Chapel in Costa Mesa.

Romaine served for over 30 years beside Chuck Smith in the ministry of Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa. He was famous for his quick wit, harsh rebukes, humor, loyalty to the ministry, his pastor, and the Word of God. With his reputation for "putting people in their place" newcomers to Calvary expected to see a rather imposing figure of a man. But Romaine stood at about five and a half feet. Although he could indeed make the largest man pale with shame, he was known by most for his incredible compassion.

He faithfully taught a study every Thursday morning. His studies were always a mixture of God's Word, self-effacing humor, his own experiences, and stories about his beloved wife, Ruth. During these studies before he would press home his greatest point, he would always readjust his glasses with one hand. "God gave you two ears and one mouth," he was famous for saying, "because He meant you to listen twice as much as you talk." Another subject that was often mentioned on Thursday mornings was the "Yeah-buts". That was Romaine's own term for those who have a "lame excuse" for not being doers of the Word. If the Word said it, it was to be done without question.

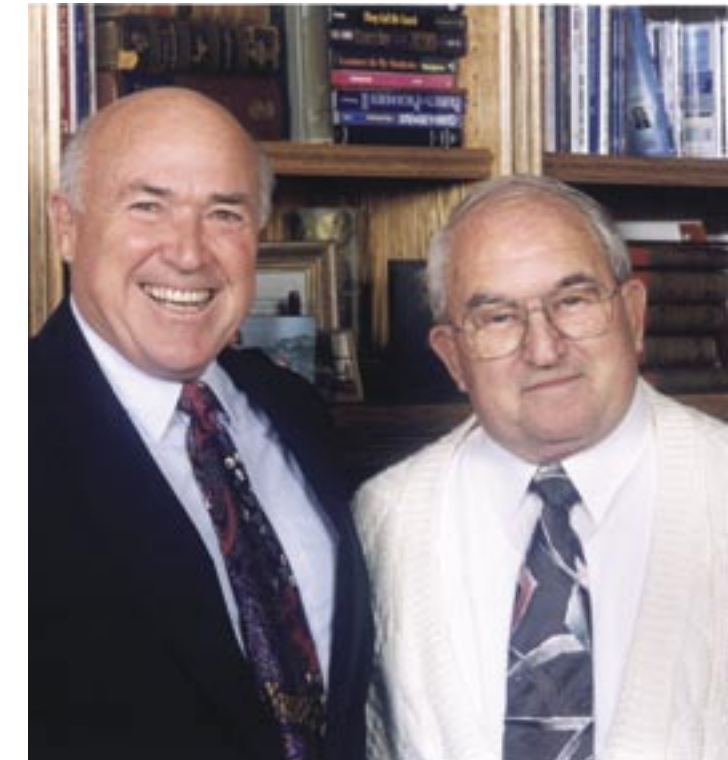
The steps of a good man
are ordered by the **LORD**;
and He delighteth in his way.

Psalms 37:23

As a youth pastor at a Methodist church in the late 60s, retired Master Gunnery Sergeant Romaine heard about young people flocking to a church in Santa Ana. He wanted to check this report out first hand. He was somewhat put off by the reports he heard and expected the worst. "What kind of church would welcome barefoot hip-



L. E. Romaine with his wife, Ruth.



L.E. Romaine was assistant pastor to Chuck Smith for over 30 years.

pies?" What he found was unexpected. He was taken in by the love, the sense of the Lord's presence, and especially by the clear and alive teaching of God's Word. He and his family began to attend Calvary Chapel regularly. Soon he sought Chuck out.

Finding Chuck involved in a building project, Romaine uncharacteristically poured

out his heart to Chuck. He filled Chuck in on his testimony and wanted to know if there was any way in which he could be involved in what he knew to be the divine move of God there at the church. "Well, I could use an assistant," was Chuck's succinct answer. From that moment until his retirement in 2001, Romaine unwaveringly stood by Pastor Chuck.

Romaine was a very private man. He would never tell anyone the year of his birth or the names that L. E. stood for. He guarded his privacy and yet was always on call for the needs of the ministry. In April 1991, Ruth, his beloved wife, was in a coma and not expected to survive. Romaine did not inform anyone at the church. Instead he kept his normal demeanor. After work each day he would drive to the hospital and talk to her about his day. After her passing, Romaine lost much of his zest for life. Although he was still faithful to God's call, he longed to be with his dear wife and with the Lord who had so gloriously redeemed him.

On January 23, 2002, God granted Romaine's desire. He went into the presence of Jesus. ☞