

Caregivers Rooted in Love

We live at Gyero Care Centre, and are responsible for looking after 120 children who cannot live in their own homes any longer. Gyero is a small, remote village on the outskirts of Jos, which is near the centre of Nigeria. When we saw the children doing the Tree of Life we decided we wanted to do our own trees. The children were talking about their hopes for their futures and how they had begun; the things they were good at doing, and how they knew to do these things. “I am getting to know my children!” We wanted to get to know ourselves and each other better too. We had a day away from the care centre so we could enjoy being together and not be distracted by the many things that go on there.

We enjoyed talking about the things we had written on our trees. In different groups for males and females, we shared our stories. It was surprising to see how many of us had been orphaned or had lost someone close to us at an early age. “In primary 1, my mother died and I lost my parental love.” “When my parents died I learnt so much from Mrs Job”! Now we are the ones that are looking after orphans. “They call me uncle – I love that!”, “I love to serve people”. Talking and listening was a good way of encouraging each other. We have been influenced by our circumstances, as well as people who have gone before us. Some of us remember that Girls Brigade had a strong influence on us too.

We talked about the storms that a tree faces. Things like fire, deforestation, erosion, lightening, parasites, dryness and strong winds can harm a tree. No, these things are not the tree’s fault.

Like our trees, we also face storms. Some of the storms we have faced have been injury, death of loved ones, temptations, a poor harvest, a lack of food, thieves, nightmares and bad dreams, sick children, unemployment, persecution, and crisis in Jos and Gyero.

When a storm comes to a tree, the animals that live there do things to survive. They run to safety, hide under rocks, or look for somewhere better to live. Sometimes they choose to ignore the danger.

As adults, we too have ways that we cope with the storms that come to our lives, and we do things to survive. We look or ask for help from others, we put our faith in God, we pray and fast. We encourage and strengthen one another, we pray for the Holy Spirit to encourage our heart during these storms.

How will we hold onto these ideas when we next face a storm? We will stand firm in God. We will remember where we came from, and remember the faithful who have gone before us. "I have to be rooted in something to become something." We will encourage one another, and listen to others tell their problems. "We come to conclusion. It is important for us to know how to respond to storms. We will stand firm."

Even after our Tree of Life day, we are still talking. "There is room for more love, now that we know each other better." "Our eyes have been opened." We would like our words to encourage others. We would like to hear from others too that know of the Tree of Life.