

# Determined to Defend

*ECM's plan to defend the defenseless, and to work toward the elimination of abuse, neglect, and discrimination within our sphere of influence in Ghana, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo - September 2020*

## Introduction

What can we *do*?

At ECM, that question is always weighing on our minds. Not “what can we talk about doing?” or “what can we think about doing?” or even “what can we plan to do?” But what can we really *do*?

This is a question that should weigh on everyone's minds, not just the minds of pastors and ministry leaders. It's critical for you as an individual Christian, for you and your spouse, for you and your family, and for you and your church. The fact is, we've all got to *do* something.

But *what*?

We can't answer that question for you, and we don't even think we're *supposed to*. It's something that you'll have to grapple with on your own.

But we *can* answer that question for ECM.

We live in a world that is constantly finding new ways to divide itself. People in general have always looked for ways to divide. We're not sociologists, so we can't explain this reality definitively, but maybe it's not as complicated as you might think. Perhaps it's because, in part at least, people are trying to create a sense of comfort and security by designing and building a box to live in, keeping out those who are scary and different, whether those differences are real or perceived.

Whatever the reason, it's what we do, and unfortunately we've gotten good at it. We divide over opinions, health practices, immunizations, masks, re-opening the economy, politics, and of course, religion. And despite Jesus's teachings to the contrary, we divide over race as well. Yes, discrimination and racial inequalities are alive and well around the world.

We live in a world full of people who need the love of Jesus, and so at ECM, we've decided that the most important thing we can do is love them all, or at least everyone God places in our path. Love takes many different shapes and forms, and of course we can't *do everything*. But we can do something, so in the coming year this is what we've decided to focus on:

*We want to defend the defenseless, working to eliminate the abuse and neglect that holds them back, and the discrimination that divides the communities in which we minister, especially the discrimination that causes pain for those with disabilities, those with albinism, and those looked*

*down upon because of their tribe or sex. We are committed to defending these children and their caregivers in every sphere where we have influence, and restoring children and communities to one another and their Creator through God's overwhelming love.*

We know it's a big goal, but in the communities where we serve, we see children abused and discriminated against everyday because of how they look, how they walk, how they talk, or simply because of the tribe they belong to. They can't go places that other kids go, or do things that other kids do. They don't get the help they need because the people around them don't care about them or are afraid of them. They end up being prisoners in their own homes. The people in their communities have built walls, and these kids are on the outside looking in. To end such treatment *is* a big goal, but it's one we are willing to go after.

Why do people choose to mistreat these kids? We know the answer is complex, but we think one reason is because people don't understand *why* these kids are the way they are. They see "curse" instead of disability or difference, and believe they need to protect themselves and their families, lest the same curse fall on them. What they need is information. They need to be educated. They need to be told the truth about what causes albinism, physical and mental disabilities, and tribal differences.

***That's where ECM can help.***

We believe that we can educate communities, families, and churches about the true causes of these differences, and more importantly, about the love that God has for these children despite the differences. We also believe that we can demonstrate for these communities *how* to love these kids unconditionally, so that everyone can see how it's done.

We truly believe that these efforts will not only change the lives of these children forever, but will also change the lives of those in the community *today*. And when lives are changed today, it leads to changed lives for all the children born into that community in the future. That's the kind of long lasting impact we are seeking.

## **Our Plan**

Our plan is two-fold: demonstration and education.

### **Demonstration**

*Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.* 1 John 4:11

*Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.* James 1:22

We believe in the simple phrase made popular by author Bob Goff: *Love Does*. Whatever terms or phrases you use, the truth is simple: Christians are not called just to *listen*, we are called to

**DO.** And here at ECM, we do a lot of doing! We spend our time loving, helping, encouraging, challenging, serving, and reassuring those whom God has called us to help. We want them to *feel* God's love tangibly, and not just hear it. We want them to know beyond a shadow of a doubt that God loves each one of them.

We don't do what we do to impress others, but there *are* benefits to having others in the community see love in action. The truth is, there are many who don't actually know *how* to love. When they see what we do, they not only learn how God calls us to love each other, but they are also inspired to do the same. We hope that our demonstrations of God's love for everyone, including the unlovable, will move people away from their discriminating behaviors of the past, and toward an attitude of love for all.

Specifically, here are some examples of how we demonstrate God's love by loving others:

- Meeting medical needs
- Providing sources of clean water
- Providing clothing and food to those in need
- Encouraging children and families through visits, Bible lessons, and letters
- Training school teachers and Sunday School teachers
- Providing items for children with albinism, such as sunscreen, hats, lip balm, and protective clothing
- Ensuring that school fees are paid so children can receive an education
- Teaching new farming techniques

## **Education**

*How much better to get wisdom than gold, to get insight rather than silver!* Proverbs 16:16

*Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning.* Proverbs 9:9

We realize that no matter how much we help, no matter how many lives we change, no matter how many children we love, the cycle of abuse, neglect, and discrimination will endlessly go on if those who are mistreating others are never shown the truth. It is up to us, (the ones who have the truth), to share it with those who are still in the dark.

That's why we are putting a renewed focus on education to help defend these children. We want to help people understand why it's so important to show love, and why mistreating others is not only misguided but detrimental to the health of children and their society as a whole. Our curriculum on the truth of albinism has been used over the years to guide communities, schools, and churches toward a more Christ-like acceptance of those with albinism. We are now expanding that curriculum to include a greater understanding and acceptance of those

with disabilities, those from other tribes, and those living in extreme poverty. This will help us guide communities away from the belief that certain children have been cursed and should be avoided, toward a love for all children that encourages everyone to embrace even the most unlovable.

We plan to take the following steps to educate communities about the negative impact of abuse, neglect, and discrimination on their children and the positive steps they can take to end its stranglehold on their lives:

- Revise and improve the current albinism curriculum
- Expand and modify the curriculum to include information regarding others who are mistreated in African society, such as those with disabilities, those from certain tribes, or those living in extreme poverty
- Engage schools, churches, and local leaders in open, respectful dialogue on the topics of abuse, neglect, and discrimination and their impact on communities

Over the course of the coming year we will be expanding our outreach into the communities where we currently minister, working to both demonstrate God's love through our actions, and to educate others on the important, biblical reasons for treating everyone with respect. We will openly discuss these critical issues with anyone who will listen, and we will not rest until all children, no matter their physical state or their level of wealth, are accepted and loved in their communities.

We pledge to regularly update our partners on the progress being made toward this goal, through our quarterly newsletters, our website, social media, and other forms of communication.