

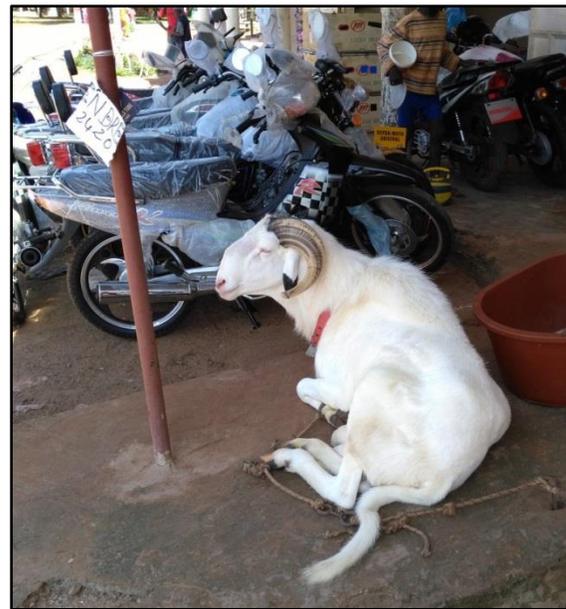
Prayer Partners,

On Monday there will be a major religious holiday among the Mandinka. The holiday commemorates God's provision of a ram to Abraham to be offered as a sacrifice, and you can find the biblical account of this event in Genesis 22.

Each year our MNK friends work hard to pool resources within each family to buy a ram. It is sacrificed with the belief that it will provide forgiveness for sin and entry to heaven.

In talking with B* in MF this Wednesday, I asked, "If you sacrifice your ram and the next instant kill your brother in anger, are you still forgiven for sin this year?" This created discomfort. The belief requires the answer to be "yes", but in B*'s heart he knows the answer is "no". I pointed out that a payment without righteousness is a soiled offering.

On Thursday the door opened for me to read the account of Gen 22 from the Bible in Mandinka with Ch*. After reading I shared what touches me most... That *God* provided the sacrifice! I explained I could never do enough good works or kill a worthy enough ram to cover my sin and bring me close to God, so God does it for me. I implied to Ch* that he cannot do enough either.



Later that day, A* confessed his family's difficulty to have a ram this year and their grave concern. As a friend of many years and many "rubber band stretches", I was glad to hear A* say, "I know that forgiveness requires more than any sacrifice that I can bring." For this friend, I recalled that Jesus, as the perfect lamb, made the sacrifice once for all. We don't need to make a sacrifice year after year... "We can be forgiven and washed before God through Him."

Would you take a minute to pray for the MNK right now? Pray for God to draw people to Himself as they long for forgiveness. Pray for spiritual openness as we share our lives and faith. Julie and I aren't the boldest, wisest, or best studied witnesses. Pray we would build strong foundations for the gospel rather than unnecessary barriers—even though it is God's work, not ours.

How can we pray for you?

Mike and Julie Ureel

* initials used to protect the identity of individuals