

BELONG TOGETHER

Fall 2019
Quarterly Update



JUSTIN

TAYLOR'S NOTE

We've been hearing some complaints lately. And they're getting to us -- under our skin and into our hearts.

We can't seem to shake it.
And we don't want to.

"It's not enough," they said. "We want more."

In the 21st century, maybe you can guess what a majority of twentysomethings would want more of -
- Better paying jobs. Vacation time. The new *Nike Air Max*.

But do you know what these young refugee men and women in Rwanda are wanting more of?

Bible studies. Bible studies!

Since Ornella, Belong Together Rwanda's lead director, initiated in-depth Bible studies with each of the Belong members there, the complaints for time in community reading and studying God's Word have not stopped.

They want to invite their friends to the weekly sessions. Their parents jump in to hear what's going on. Even those who say they don't like to read are finding themselves in the Word each day, and loving it.

This is nothing from human effort. This is God igniting something deeper. And we pray their thirst for God's Word -and their complaints for more of it- to keep coming.

Belong Together Rwanda is entering a season of growth. You helped build the runway -the foundation of this ministry- and we can't wait to share with you in the pages to follow what is getting ready to launch. When the plane lifts off the runway, we want you to be part of the reason why. Thank you for being in this next chapter with us!

With joy and gratitude,



Taylor Smith
Founder and President
belongtogether.org

BREAKTHROUGH

You may not know this, but we see ourselves as farmers. Novice farmers, at that. Farmers who were plopped in a field with little experience and a few tools, but with a clear mission and message, “tend the seeds.”

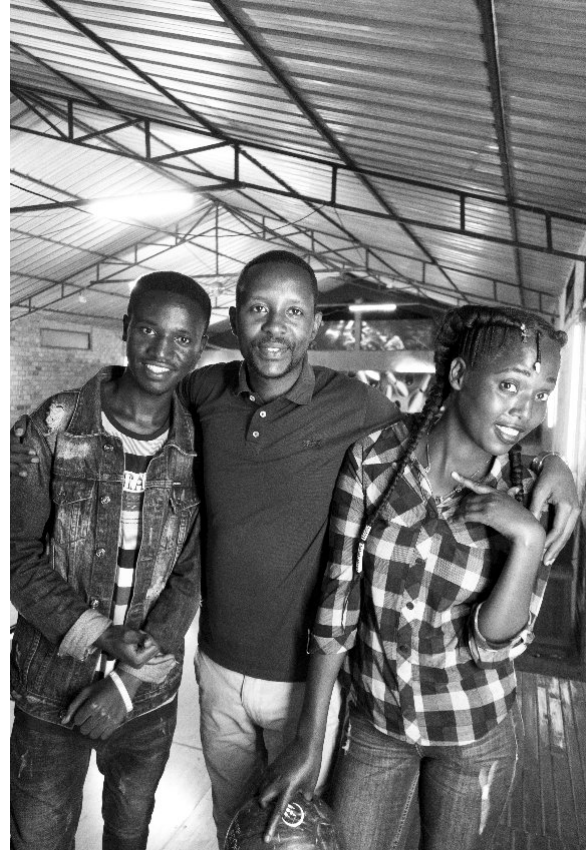
Since we began our pilot Belong group in Rwanda in August 2018, we’ve been tuning our ear to God each day, learning how to grow a ministry, and most importantly, how to patiently wait for God to yield the harvest when the time is right.

After a year of exploring and tending in Rwanda, we are excited to see new life breaking through the soil, and growing!

From our pilot Belong groups, three new groups are springing forth, and with leadership from members within the ministry. One of the new groups is even focused on those with disabilities.

We love seeing how God is bringing more farmers to the field --young men and women with unique passions, skills and gifts He has given them-- but with the same message whispered, “tend the seeds.”

We can’t wait to see what this second year of ministry in Rwanda holds as God continues to break through, grow and guide.



EMMY, JUSTIN, & TESSY

WORDS MATTER

Our world is filled with words. And words hold power. Power to build up, and power to break down.

With the flood of language around us, we found ourselves asking, "What words are we feeding our minds?"

Deeply passionate about God's Word, Ornella felt called to initiate in-depth Bible studies tailored to our Belong members in Rwanda. She spends up to three hours preparing for each meeting, diving into Scripture, and considering questions for each member's story. In Bible study time, Belong members have the opportunity to ask questions and grow more in their faith in the freedom to voice any uncertainties they've had.

We love how Ornella leaned into God's prompting to begin these Bible studies, as they have become the standard for how we want Belong together to grow. We can't wait to see what fruit comes from Belong members understanding and growing in God's Word more and more.

"Claude is from the Gihembe refugee camp and a member of our second Belong group, B2. He's currently in his first year of university in Kigali, yet living in the city hasn't been without its challenges.

In a recent conversation, Claude told me that in the middle of his struggles, Friday has become his favorite day of the week because it's the day we meet for Bible study. You can imagine how encouraged I was after that! In fact, he has started to share about the way of salvation in his Bible group at school! I'm hoping that through doing more Bible studies, and by God's help, he will be more confident in his beliefs."

-Pacis Ornella, Belong Together Rwanda Director



BIBLE STUDY IN RWANDA

A MESSAGE FROM ORNELLA

Ange, a member of our B2 group, grew up in church. She has been in the choir from her childhood, and she does her best to respect the Sabbath day. But something that was missing from her life was reading the Bible. She knew only what they would teach her at church.

When we were in one of our monthly Belong group meetings, the question was raised, *"If you were asked why God should let you enter His Kingdom, what would be your answer?"*

Almost everyone, Ange included, said they would remind God of their good works.

Then I asked, *"If you died right now, would you be accepted? Have you already done enough good works for your acceptance?"*

They said they still have a long way to go. Most of them argued that their conscience still has things to accuse them of. Therefore, they said they weren't ready to appear before God.

From this conversation in our group meeting, I knew God was leading us to take a look at what God's Word says about salvation, what grace means, and if we, in our sin, can ever be perfect enough by our own works to enter God's Kingdom.



ANGE & HER MOTHER

...CONTINUED

In a one-on-one time with Ange after talking about these things, she looked thoughtfully at me and said, almost to herself, *"What would have happened if I didn't meet you?"*

Of course, I got curious. She explained...

"Among all the people around me, absolutely no one had ever told me and explained that we are saved by God's grace through faith. Some people just don't care about God and what He says. Others believe in work-based salvation. If my pastors knew about this, it's strange, because they never told me. Or maybe they said it, but I was too blind to see it as it was. I'm familiar with the verses where Jesus says He's the way, the truth and the life, that no one goes to God the Father except through me (Jesus). But, I never understood what it meant. I had never understood what it means Biblically to believe in Jesus as your only possible Savior. And if it's really that serious and exclusive, it means people who don't believe it believe in the wrong gospel or don't believe at all."

She seemed shocked but also happy to be convicted that she knows the Truth now and she believes it. In the following meeting, we went back to the previous questions a little bit and I was happy and grateful to hear her professing that she's saved, accepted by God through Jesus on the cross!



ORNELLA

PDX UPDATE

These past few months in Portland have been filled with adventure. We celebrated three Belong members who graduated from high school (and are beginning college this week!). We biked and hiked our way through city streets and forest paths. And we watched our family grow as Belong Together's Founder, Taylor, got engaged to her best friend, Jackson!

After a summer filled with joy and surprises, our high school and early-college girls and guys groups are back in session. Reflecting on how we want this season to be different than any one we've had before, we're dedicating this year to commitment, wisdom and saying "yes" to God's best.



PRAYER REQUESTS

Every action in our life is building upon something. At Belong Together, we want the base of all we do to be built upon prayer. Prayer is nothing small to us. Thank you for joining us to pray for our needs, and as the Spirit leads you!



GIHEMBE REFUGEE CAMP

- For **wisdom**. As we grow, we don't want to rush ahead, but stay in step with the Spirit. Without God's wisdom, we risk building a house on an uneven foundation. To grow well, we pray we keep choosing God's will and listening to that still, small voice to guide us.
- For **equipping new leaders**. God is calling our ministry leadership to expand. Please pray for the men and women whom God is calling to be part of our team. Pray that we rely on God to teach us how to encourage, hold accountable, and create healthy spaces for these men and women to become who God created them to be.
- For **unity**. When God planted the vision for Belong Together in January 2018, it wasn't limited to one place or one people. The vision was for the ministry to go anywhere and everywhere God wants it to be. As God takes Belong Together to new places and brings new people into the family, we ask that you pray that we may be united, as one body in Christ.

PARTNER WITH US

Right now, you can be a part of what God is doing in Belong Together through...

Kinyarwanda Bibles: The Rwandan Bible Society prints incredible Kinyarwanda study Bibles. These Bibles not only contain the NIV translation in Kinyarwanda, but are also loaded with notes and references that provide so much insight to the text. These Bibles are \$17 each. We would love to get a copy of the Bible in Kinyarwanda to each of our Belong members in Rwanda. With three new groups starting, we want to have 30 copies on hand. (\$17 for one Bible, \$510 for all 30!)

Equip Disciples: One of the ways we share God's love is by equipping our Belong groups with support and provisions to regularly meet. Those things look like snacks, workbooks, supplies, transport and dedicated group leaders.

For each of the three new Belong groups in Rwanda, \$375 will cover the needs for a group of 10 people each month. We would be honored to have you champion one of the new groups as they launch.

Ornella's Pastor Training: Ornella is being further equipped as a ministry leader by being part of pastoral training for the next year in Rwanda. What an opportunity! Each module is \$200, and there are six total. We'd love to have you sponsor one of the modules Ornella will be taking! (\$200 for one module, \$1,200 for all six)



ALBERT

GIVING

If you'd like to give, you can do so online through PayPal on our website

belongtogether.org/donate

Or, you can send your support via mail!
Make checks payable to:

Belong Together
PO Box 6553
Portland, OR 97228

Our Tax ID number is 82-4357562

THANK YOU

On behalf of your Belong Together family, **thank you for walking alongside us on this journey to celebrate how we all belong to God.**

Thank you for being with us as we commit to living from our identity in Christ, and loving and serving our world wholeheartedly.

We love you!
Your Belong Together family

