

BELONG TOGETHER

Summer 2020
Quarterly Update



TAYLOR'S NOTE	2
TESTIMONIES	4
FABRICE	5
LYSE	6
SEBAGISHA	7
EMMANUEL'S REFLECTION	8
UPDATES & NEWS	10
PRAYER REQUESTS	12
PARTNER WITH US	13
GIVING / THANK YOU	14

TAYLOR'S NOTE

Have you ever heard of the expression, "We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak"?

Insightful, right? I've loved this quote for the wisdom to listen more than share, yet recently, these words have called me to examine something else; the importance of what we use our ears for -- what we listen to.

What are you listening to these days?

Our world is filled with sounds of all kinds, signaling information we consume,

process and make decisions from. With the advent of the digital age, there are more platforms than ever before for voices to be heard.

In fact, **try this experiment:** If you closed your eyes and heard a song, how long would it take you to guess the voice of your favorite singer? What about the voice of a politician? Your best friend? Your parent or child?



It probably wouldn't take you too long to know who was talking, even if you couldn't see them. The voices we listen to over and over stand out to us. We learn their tone and inflection. We learn the words they use repeatedly. From what they say, we also become familiar with their values, beliefs and opinions.

Now, here is an honest question, one your Belong Together family is asking ourselves today. In the list of all these voices we know and listen to, **do we know God's voice?** If we were to close our eyes and hear dozens of voices, **would we be able to pick out the Word of God, spoken truthfully, not twisted?** Based on what we read in the Bible of God's character, nature, the things He has done and promises He has made, **would we know a voice that is pointing towards God's Kingdom, and one that wasn't?**

While the volume in our world is turning up, the men and women of Belong Together, from Rwanda to Portland, are seeking out quiet moments to study God's Word. To pursue Him. To know Him. To ask

ourselves honest questions about whose voice we are listening to, and what way we want to follow.

As we commit to seeking the truth of the Gospel, *we can't thank God enough for how He has allowed you to help us create communities for young men and women who've experienced displacement to learn and know the voice of God, and to choose the cross of Christ, a life of belonging to Him.* We pray the stories shared in this update encourage you that hearing the Gospel is bringing life and freedom still. We believe it always will.

With gratitude and joy in Christ,



Taylor Gakundi
Founder and President
belongtogether.org



BELONG
TOGETHER

3
belongtogether.org

TESTIMONIES

Since Belong Together's start in Rwanda in 2018, more than 40 men and women have been part of our spiritual mentorship groups, asking honest questions about belonging in refugee experiences, and seeking the truth of the Gospel to learn about the identity Christ extends to all who choose to believe in Him.

The friendship and family bonds we have developed with our Belong Together members in Rwanda have encouraged us to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, and that our labor to share and seek the Gospel is not in vain.

In their own words, Fabrice, Lyse and Sebagisha wanted to share with you about their experiences so far in Belong Together...



Fabrice, Huye Group for disabilities

“For my side, I always thank Belong Together because it helped me to know why I belong to Jesus, to know who I am, and to believe that everything that happens to me is God's plan in one way or another. It has helped me to plan my future according to the Gospel, to gain more friends, and has improved my joy by sharing with Belong members in different ways. From day one BT became my family where I enjoy to belong because I learn many things as a member of the family. I would like to thank everyone who do his or her best to make BT a better family.”

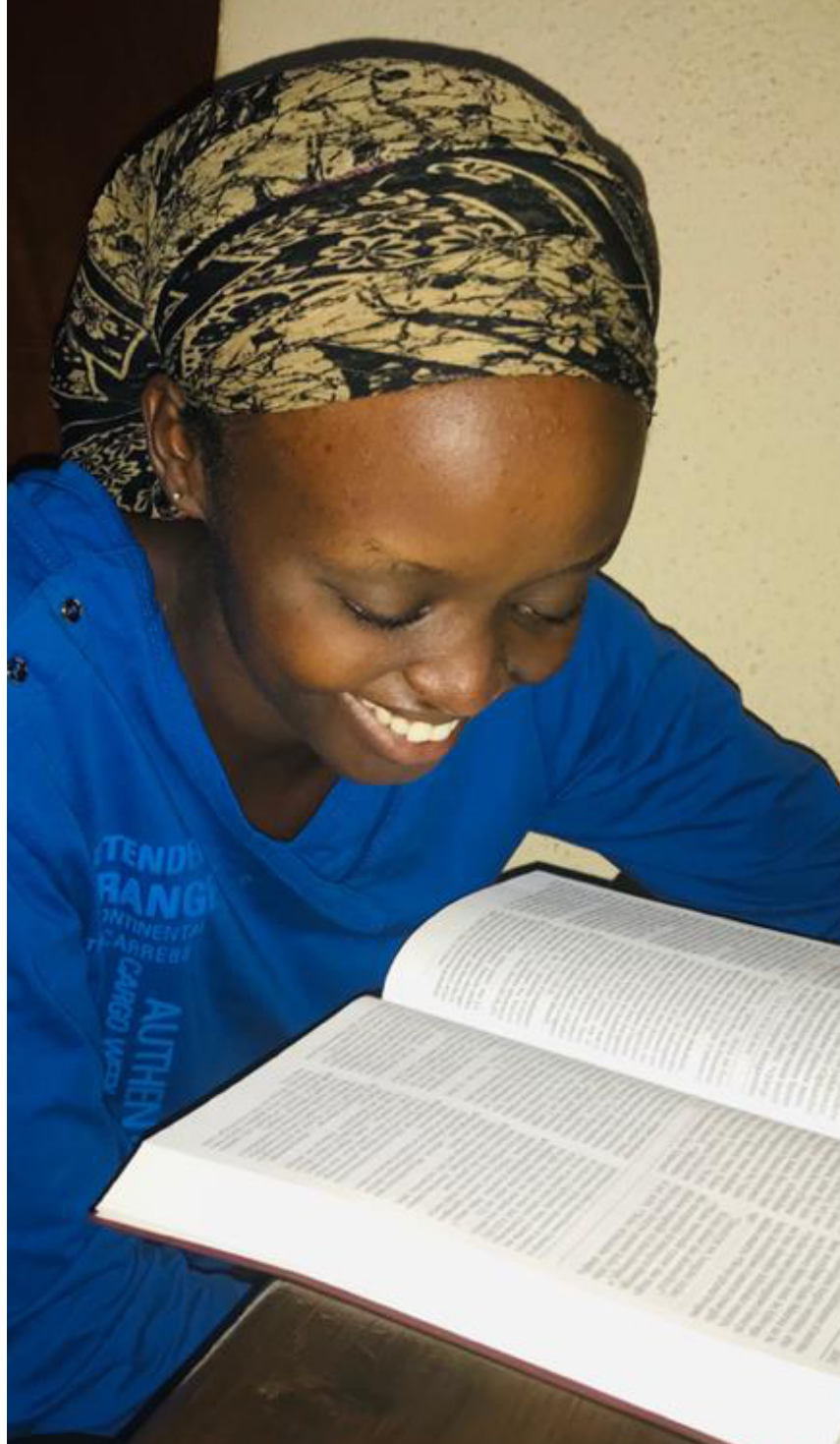


Lyse, Kigali Group

“First of all, I thank the Lord Almighty who allowed me to be a member of Belong Together. I will always be thankful, because in Belong Together, God revealed to me who He is.

I was living in a life where I thought I knew God, but I was totally wrong. I was traveling through a bad period when I was angry with God, thinking God was unjust, asking things like, ‘Why is this happening to me?’ I didn't have peace in my heart. I was the Christian who went to church on Sundays and would sometimes feel good, but when I would get back home, I would return to living my life of sin.

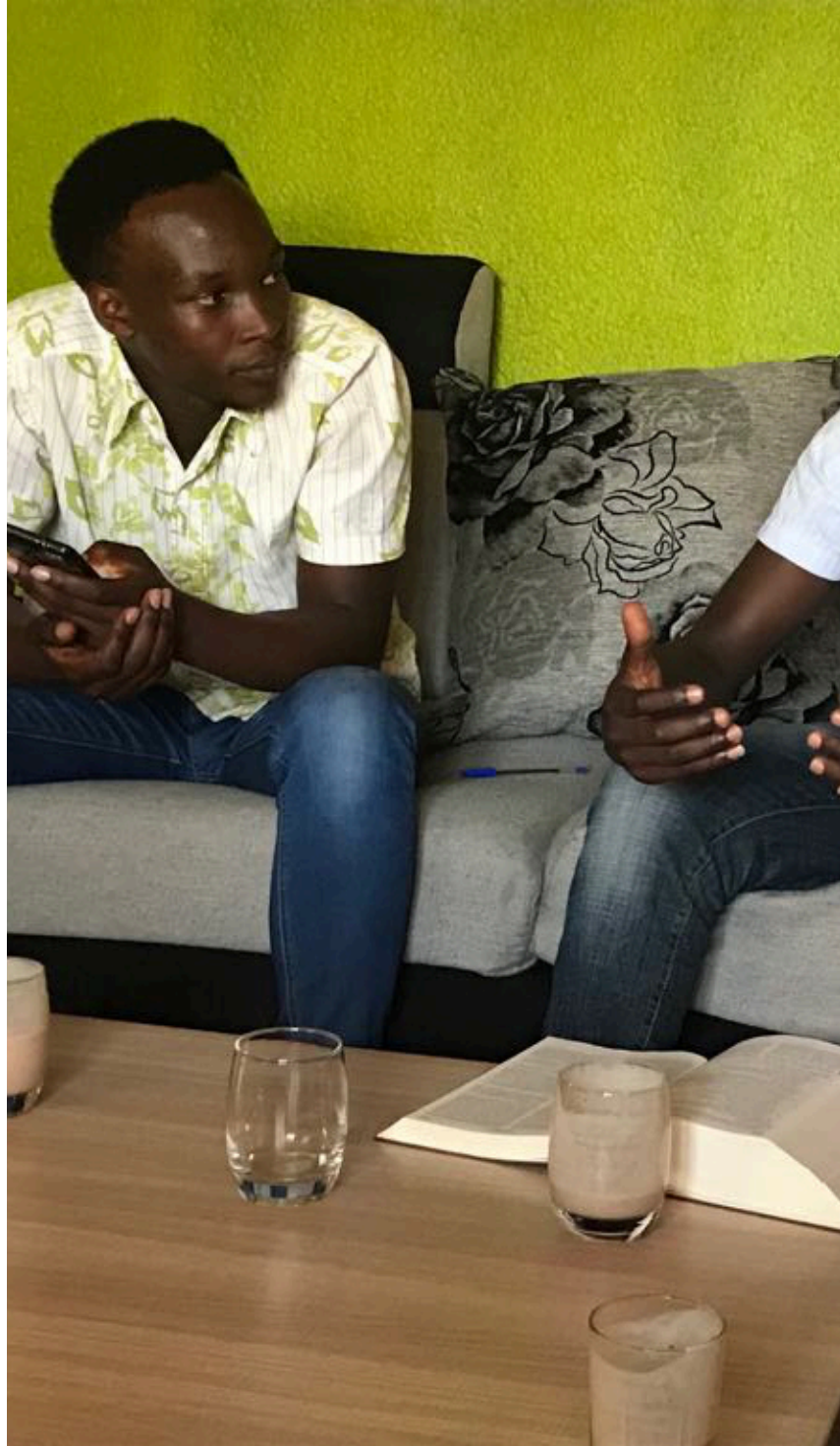
But meanwhile, we had meetings with the Belong Together family where we discussed the Belong Together workbook and had Bible studies. That is when I started to understand who God really is -- not the God I was imagining in my head. It's when I also came to know of my sin nature and the consequences of sin. I came to know how much God is Love and how He gave us His only Son so that myself and others may be saved, even though we didn't deserve it. I came to understand what the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross means for me and others Christians. Now I can say that I found peace in Christ and a new life in Him, and that day by day I'm learning new things, discovering God, who is all Holy, all love, and all Sovereign.”



Sebagisha, Gihembe Group

"In 2018, I learned about Belong Together from a friend and neighbor of mine. Since becoming part of this group, I have learned from the Bible what salvation is -- knowing and believing Jesus Christ is the only way. Believing that the Son of God, Jesus, is the promise of heaven is something more crucial than any other. If you believe someone, you act like him or work in accordance with what he orders. I learned from Romans 9:16 how "everything depends, not on what human beings want or do, but only on God's mercy." I learned different important information from the Bible, which I was not aware of before. I live with happiness because of the hope of heaven.

Last but not least, I have time to interact with different people from different places. As Belong Together is a community, I received many friends from there whom we share different information about personal life and Biblical teachings. This increased my hope of the future life as a Christian who sees Jesus as the only way to heaven and salvation base."



EMMANUEL'S REFLECTION

Six months ago, Belong Together was blessed by the addition of Emmanuel Masengesho to our ministry leadership team in Rwanda. We have met few young men who have a passion for the Gospel like Emmanuel. To read a message from him is like reading a letter written by Paul to the early churches -- full of conviction, praise and hope for who God is, what He has done, and belief in what He will do. We're excited to share with you Emmanuel's reflection on these past few months of ministry in Belong Together!

"From February 2020, by God's doing, I became one of the Group Leaders in the Belong Together family. Both excited and expectant, I thank the Lord for using such as myself!

In my mind I knew that for as long as the Lord allows me to serve in BT, this lamp must guide my feet: "One life, it will soon pass. Only what's done for Christ will last." It has always been my prayer that I might always remember that I am serving Christ, for the glory of the Father, in the power of the Spirit. My wisdom, knowledge, and charisma mean nothing and are needed by none until they are serving that end!

I knew I was coming to preach the Gospel. We Belong Together! Our identity is in Christ...this is the ringing motto for the ministry, and what a powerful message





these few words carry! Yet, we do not belong to Christ until we are saved by him through his Gospel. For this reason, I have always labored to put much emphasis on the salvation of the soul, which alone can open one's heart to see the overabounding love of God for them, the ever-satisfying adoption into God's family and the blessed hope of eternal joy.

Most men and women here love to discuss the Bible. They have so many questions about it, from whether it is God's word at all to how one can be able to love it and read it daily. We sit together, either in a one-on-one meeting or in a small group meeting. We try to go through a certain chapter in the Bible. It is often fun and enjoyable and God is teaching me how to explain the same message of God's love in various passages in the Bible.

God was also pleased to use these lockdown days to introduce me more intimately to the majority of BT members through daily long calls. I have seen the fruit of this already, some who once were lost, can now testify that they have found hope in Christ's blood. Others are getting more and more familiar with reading and understanding the Bible. Yet some few are still behind, and we trust in the Lord for His work in them."



UPDATES & NEWS



In our last update, we shared with you our need for Kinyarwanda Bibles for our Belong Together members in Rwanda. God generously provided 40 Bibles through the partnership of River West Church in Oregon! These were received with such joy, as it was the first time most of our members held their own Bible.



Reunited and it feels so good! Now that lockdowns in Rwanda have eased, it has been a blessing for our leaders and members to meet in person again. Some members, with more time available, asked to have multiple Bible study sessions with a leader each week. Our leaders happily and readily said, "yes!"



We've found time outside in God's creation is one of the best places to talk about Him and see His glory, reflected in every tree and mountaintop. This summer in Oregon, we've hit the hiking trails with our brothers and sisters for honest conversations about questions of faith and identity, and reflect on what Jesus' work on the cross means and offers us today.

UPDATES & NEWS

Friends of Belong Together, Iranzi Ntihemuka and Alice Mukashyaka, along with the Concannon-Dereiko family, started an amazing organization, the Refugee Education Project (REP), investing in young African refugees to help them continue with their advanced education in Rwanda. The students they help are from some of the same camps where our Belong members live. We are grateful and excited about the work they are doing, and how Belong Together has gotten to be part of it through supporting the Leadership Retreats for their students. You can learn more about the work REP is doing on their website (repafrika.org) with opportunities to give directly to support their mission.



REP



Refugee Education Project

PRAYER REQUESTS

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.



Rwanda: Throughout the past four months impacted by the events of the coronavirus, schools closed, jobs were halted or lost, and families felt increasing pressure in providing for their children. Please pray against any spirit of hopelessness or discouragement. In these moments of doubt, pray that our Belong members seek and hold fast to the promises of God and be led to trust in the conquering work of Jesus on the cross over every area of their lives.

Portland: In this cultural moment, we feel the Spirit pressing upon us more than ever the importance of having conversations about faith and identity. As the Spirit leads us to spend time with young men and women in Portland, please pray for hearts and minds to be open to seeking Jesus as they question who they are and who they will follow. We pray for our brothers and sisters to plant their feet upon the rock of Christ, not the shifting sands of the world.

Ministry: Taylor and Jackson will soon be traveling to Rwanda to support our Belong family there and explore important registration decisions. The path to travel is not easy these days, but we believe God opens doors no man can shut, and purposefully shuts doors no man can open. Please pray for God to open doors by His might and power, close doors that would lead us from less than His best, and that we would be ready to walk in the way He leads..

PARTNER WITH US

The time has come -- God is growing Belong Together in Rwanda, and He is sending Taylor and Jackson to support and spend time with our family there. This is a huge answer to prayer for us! With this trip, we hope to bring our team items they need to help grow and strengthen the ministry. We would love for you to consider partnering with us in these ways we need...

Books for our library: With your help last year, we started a Belong Together library with books our members are using on their journey to knowing Christ. Most of our Belong family in Rwanda has limited access to books, and we are looking forward to expanding our library to offer them even more! Our ministry leaders in Rwanda have requested these books, now on our [Amazon book list](#). Taylor and Jackson would love to take as many of these books as possible to Rwanda! If you want the book to be Rwanda-bound by the time they leave, ***please make sure the books arrive by Friday, August 14th.***

Laptop: Currently, our ministry leaders in Rwanda are doing most of their research and planning from their smartphones. With laptops, our ministry leaders could be preparing for meetings and creating content for Bible studies much faster and more efficiently. You have helped us reach this point in our ministry and with your support, you can help us reach even more young people through safe, loving communities to explore the Gospel and know their belonging to God. **(\$600 for a refurbished laptop -- we would love to bring 1 to 3 to Rwanda!)**

Recurring support: We are excited by how God is bringing more men and women to Belong Together who are curious about the Bible and a relationship with Jesus. Our hope is to say "yes" to walk alongside anyone God brings our way. One of the best ways you can help our ministry continue is through recurring monthly support via PayPal by checking the "monthly donation" box.



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 a life of belonging to God.** Thank you for being with us as we commit to living from our identity in Christ, and loving and serving Jesus wholeheartedly.

We love you!
Your Belong Together family

