



### Kogo Takes Ministry in Thika to Another Level

*By Tom Smith, ITEM Executive Director*

Who was the Apostle Paul of Tarsus? What did he think and what was his message? Abraham Kogo taught Acts and the Pauline Epistles for ITEM to a class at All Nations College in Thika in mid October. Abraham is the country director for ATA (Africans Teaching Africans) in Kenya as well as country coordinator for MINTS (Miami International). His vision is to establish more teaching centers across both Kenya and all of Africa to train up more pastors to shepherd the flock of Jesus Christ.

Abraham lives about 25 miles outside of Eldoret (Kenya's fifth largest city) in western Kenya with his wife, Judith, and their three children. He grew up in a Christian family and decided to follow Jesus as a youth at camp. After high school, he went to Warminster Theological Seminary in Uganda, where he earned a Bachelor's degree. Then he earned a Master's from Miami International and is currently working on a doctorate there.

Teaching God's Word is Abraham's favorite work. The class at All Nations College was described as "dynamic" by director Daniel Muindi. Abraham not only lectured but also engaged the students through questions and answers and group discussions. Daniel was impressed with how well prepared Abraham came to teach the class on Paul.

Besides teaching and handling administrative tasks, Abraham travels around Kenya seeking to open new training centers for pastors. He recruits teachers for both ATA and MINTS. The church across Africa is growing and he wants pastors to be equipped. Abraham cares deeply about solid, Christ-centered exegetical preaching, that only the Word of God should be expounded upon and not the speculative fancy of someone's imagination.

ITEM is working with MINTS and hopefully in the future with ATA to provide more training in Africa. We are thankful to Julian Zugg of MINTS for recommending Abraham to teach for us at All Nations. In the words of Daniel Muindi, "he took ministry to another level." We look forward to building up God's Kingdom in Kenya, partnering with Abraham Kogo and MINTS and ATA.

#### How to Contribute

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## Doors Close, Windows Open and God Remains in Control

Will Hesterberg, ITEM's board chairman, appeared via Zoom to answer questions from students in India after they watched modules last week. It was early in the morning here and early in the evening there. Just another day in the life of mission work that only faintly resembles itself from this time last year.

ITEM has faced many challenges in the midst of the coronavirus. Teaching via Zoom works OK for countries who are close to the United States in time. Recorded modules work OK for countries far ahead of us in time. But Zoom lacks the intimacy of personal encounters. And some teachers struggle to record videos while talking just to a camera without real people reacting to what they are saying. In both cases, the lack of feedback, the inability to interact with students before and after class, has been a struggle.

But in the midst of these troubles, ITEM has found opportunities. "It's one of those cases where a door closes, but God opens a window of opportunity," Hesterberg said.

Money that would have been spent on travel can be redirected elsewhere. ITEM had planned to convene Americans and Indians for training in Kathmandu, Nepal. But Nepal closed its borders. ITEM decided to spend the money it

would have spent on travel on technology instead—projectors, smart TVs, etc.—so students in India can watch the modules. There was money left over after that, which was given to pastors in India as financial aid to offset the economic crisis in the country.

Using modules is a backup plan, now and in the future. "Our preference still is to get back to face-to-face instruction. We feel there is no substitute for that," Hesterberg said. "This is simply a temporary substitute until we can start traveling again." But even when travel resumes, the modules will still be valuable. Occasionally an instructor gets sick, or something happens at his church or with his family, and he can't make a scheduled trip. "It's so short-notice that we really can't get somebody else plugged in as a substitute. Now it's easy for us to say, we'll just send you the module instead."

Modules can serve as a tool to get to hard to reach places. "We are planning to use these modules to expand to new fields where maybe we can't get there. So we send them a module, which gives them a taste of what our teaching is like. Then they can decide, yes, we want more of that or, well, maybe not. So we don't spend as much money up front doing the exploratory work. But if it works out letting the video do our initial job, then we have the opportunity to expand into more fields that way."

## Prayer Requests

1. For Sacha Walicord as he teaches a class on Worldviews on Zoom to students in Riga, Latvia at Baltic Reformed Theological Seminary as well as to many other Russian speakers in other countries who can join on a Russian Zoom channel with their translator.
2. Pray for Artis, wife Kristina and daughter Paula Celmins, who all have COVID19. Artis is the director of BRTS. Paula has had interstitial lung disease since she was very young; Artis and Kristina are extremely concerned that COVID19 will damage Paula's lungs.
3. Pray for the "Trainers of Trainers" from All Nations College who will go out to teach what they learned from Abraham Kogo's class on Acts and Pauline Epistles.