

## River in the Heart

*Ingrid Wilts is a single woman, a missionary from Holland, who came to Uganda in 1981 to serve Jesus. Since then she has been robbed at gunpoint, shot, maligned and falsely accused of practising witchcraft, being a rebel leader and a political agitator. Having passed through valleys of pain, loneliness and questioning doubt, Ingrid has emerged as an inspirational testimony of enduring faith. Today she leads a restoration ministry for the broken-hearted from her beautiful and picturesque property at Jinja, where the River Nile flows out of Lake Victoria.*

Mto Moyoni is Swahili for 'River in the Heart'. The very location of this ministry seems prophetic. As we sit and talk to Ingrid we are overlooking the very place where the Nile River begins its long journey north through Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia and Egypt to the Mediterranean Sea. Along the way the waters of the Nile irrigate some of the most arid lands in Africa giving life, sustenance and an abundance of food to millions.

It is Ingrid's belief that just like the mighty River Nile, the Spirit of God seeks to water the hearts of all that believe and provide them with healing and abundant life.

'Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, rivers of living water shall flow from within him' – Jesus (John 7:38)

But there was a time in Ingrid's Christian life when she felt that there was no river flowing in her life at all. 'I began to discover what was blocking the river and that he (God) wanted it to flow... there were things in me that were blocking it from flowing, so when we started this ministry we decided to call it Mto Moyoni. God desires for us to have that river flow, first of all to refresh ourselves and then to refresh those around us.

I came to Uganda in 1981. I was very adventurous and wanted to go to a country where there was no Coca-Cola. I was doing volunteer work in a children's home and my car was the only car around so in my car children were born and in my car children died. That bonded me to the country. They were troubled times for Uganda and often we would go out and find dead bodies lying on the roadside. I was here for 2 years then in 1983 returned to Holland, but my heart remained here in Uganda. After six years of waiting, God finally gave me the green light to return. I was invited to start a vocational training centre in Mbale. You know, the Dutch are very direct, very different to Ugandans and I was very result-oriented and that was causing friction. My contract ended and I was called back to Holland.

I knew God had called me to Uganda but it wasn't clear what I would do. I decided to return for six months and see if God would open doors. While I was preparing to return a fax came in saying that immigration had been advised not to allow me back in Uganda. But when I entered Uganda the immigration officer saw me and said, 'Hey, you have been away long. Welcome back! We are so happy to see you back in Uganda!' I stood there and said 'God this must be you!' It was a difficult time because people started talking. Knowing that I had left an organisation under difficult circumstances some came and gave me discouraging 'words from the Lord'. During that time I just read through the New Testament and underlined all God's promises to me in red and everything that God wanted me to do in blue. I wrote a project proposal for working with street children and gave it to a number of pastors in Mbale. One of them came back and said, 'When are we starting?' Our organisation was called Child Restoration Outreach and so we began. During this time I innocently removed some political posters from our building because it had just been freshly painted. For this I was arrested, interrogated and accused of being a political agitator and a rebel leader. God worked in amazing ways to vindicate me from those charges, but rumours about me kept circulating, including the false accusation that I was involved in witchcraft. All I could do was cry out to God.

I began to have a feeling that I was going to die a violent death. So when friends from Holland visited I gave them my last messages. In October '96 I was having dinner with a friend and my night watchman was having a night off. I heard footsteps and I thought people were coming, so I stood up said, 'You are welcome...' A gun fired and a bullet went right through my arm, shattering the bone. Four men with guns said that they wanted money. As I stood up to get the money they pointed again to shoot me, which is when I realised that this was what God had been telling me. I shouted, 'In the name of Jesus you people go! Go! Go!' Four pairs of arms went up in the air and they backed away and took off! From that moment I just knew I was alive only because of the name of Jesus and for no other reason. On the way to the hospital I said to God, 'I just don't want to live the rest of my life in fear... please erase this from my memory'. So every time when I think about it all I see is four pairs of arms up in the air! It was the most amazing thing I have ever seen and for three months I felt that I was untouchable.

It took a year for my arm to heal so I went to Europe. Then the questions started, 'God if I am your child, why? Why are you allowing all these things to happen to me?' By the time I came back from Europe my contract had ended so I had six months to finish and it wasn't a peaceful time. I moved to Jinja but the

rumours about me had gone ahead of me. All that I had gone through begun to harden my heart and even though I could do my work I was not able to really live. I was just surviving. In Holland people would say, 'Ingrid, thanks for the wonderful work you are doing with the street kids in Uganda', but I knew my work was useless because 1 Corinthians 13 says that anything we do without love is useless. There was a disconnection between my head and my heart.

I didn't have any love left in me after all I had endured. It had all become a duty and I no longer enjoyed what I was doing. But most of all, I really was sick of my own hypocrisy, pretending that I was doing good work but knowing that it was worth nothing. One day I said to God, 'I have done my part, I have tried to be faithful, I have tried to forgive people, but I don't have the life in abundance that your word promises me. So either your word is wrong or there is something wrong with me.' I prayed, 'Here I am, just show me what's wrong with me'.

After I prayed that prayer I was diagnosed with breast cancer and was flown to Holland. The night before I left, God woke me with the verse, 'This sickness will not lead to death but to glorify me', so I knew I was going to live. Half an hour at the hospital in Holland revealed that it was a misdiagnosis. I went to my pastor and said, 'I need to know why I am in Holland' and we prayed. He said, 'I feel that there's a lot of pain in you' So I started sharing a few things and then he gave me an assignment: 'Go and ask God to let you feel the pain.' So I went to the beach for a long walk and finally had the courage to ask God, 'God if it's true that I am walking around with pain in my life let me feel it.' The moment I asked that this huge weight came on my heart and I couldn't walk any more. I had to just tell God, 'I can't go back to Uganda with this pain'.

During a renewal meeting I received prayer. The pain in my heart crumbled and the pain also left my arm and this was the beginning of the healing process. God began to reveal that his love is much stronger than my pain. At a school of ministry in Canada, God also revealed other areas in my life where I had hardened my heart, closed my heart and where I had become a fighter. The more I surrendered the more God's love released me and the deeper I saw the roots of my pain from childhood and adolescence. I realised that I just needed more of God. Then God asked me if I was willing to give up my ministry with Child Restoration Outreach. I struggled with that for three days, but I understood that God was telling me that he did not want my works, but my whole heart and I resigned. God began to show me that his desire for me was even greater than my desire for him - that he wanted to give me his heart - a heart full of love and compassion.

It was in my brokenness, when I finally gave up, that God said, 'OK, now I can come in'. I had been such a fighter, such a person who could hold things under control. But God showed me that it was not about me but all about him. God began to show me that he had allowed me to go through all these things so that he could use me to bring healing to others. I purchased this land in 1992, not knowing what God's plan was. It was just bush land and people told me that I was mad. I felt if God wanted to do something here then I would just start and build a few houses for people to be able to stay here. Slowly the Mto Moyoni ministry developed as we began to receive revelation that God's love is so much stronger than evil. Today we are a small community and believe that this is a safe place where people can come to discover the things that block the river of healing from flowing in their hearts.'

To learn more about Mto Moyoni, contact Ingrid Wilts:  
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