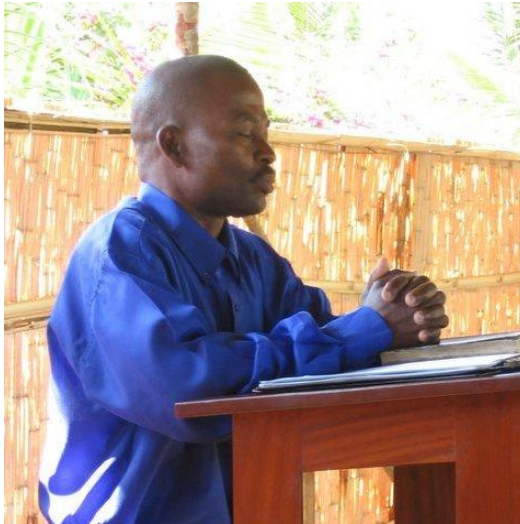


# March Prayer Points 4

*Those who do not have time to read the stories may still get the main points in under two minutes by scanning the red print and looking at the photos.*

Dear Friends:

This installment continues my presentation of some of our key church members and their testimonies.



**Arnaldo Aquiles** – Arnaldo is one of our leaders and the first person to be saved in our ministry back in 1990. At salvation, Arnaldo was dramatically transformed, and he grew rapidly as a Christian, devouring the word of God from cover to cover in his first year of spiritual life – a notable feat given that he had only a fifth grade education before going to nursing school.

God paired Arnaldo and me together when Arnaldo was assigned on my first day in the hospital to work continuously at my side as a nurse and surgical assistant, translating for me from Portuguese into the local African dialect. From the earliest days of his salvation, Arnaldo has had an unquenchable joy in the Lord and loves everything related to Christ while often weeping over the spiritual blindness of fellow Makuas.

**Arnaldo was a nominal Muslim at the time God saved him, married to the daughter of the leader of a mosque. When his in-laws learned of Arnaldo's conversion, they came for an extended visit expecting to take their daughter, Mussite, away from the infidel if he would not recant. However, they were impressed with Arnaldo's devotion to their daughter and his family. Deciding they could not get a better husband, they let her stay despite Arnaldo's refusal to forsake Christ, but they insisted she never come to the church and that she remove herself from the house during family devotions.**

**Over the past 23 years, Arnaldo has reared his family in the Lord. While all of his children have developed into strong Christians and pillars in the church, Mussite has remained faithful to her parents' injunction to have nothing to do with Christianity. For long years we have prayed and fasted for God to change Mussite's heart, but without a glimmer of softening thus far. To the contrary, in a home of five strong Christians, Mussite is as forlorn as a Christian would be in a household of Muslims, and Arnaldo believes it is only her financial dependence that prevents her from fleeing the family despite the love they all have for her!**





**Costodio Gustavo** – Gustavo is our other church leader and one of the original nine men who founded the church. Like Arnaldo, Gustavo had a thorough-going conversion with an immediate thirst for the Scriptures matched by a clear understanding of what he read. From the beginning he was a ready Bible teacher.

**The most remarkable thing about Gustavo is how his obedience to Christ has resulted in his remaining celibate well into his 40's, an extraordinary phenomenon in Makua society. Gustavo is a schoolteacher with a college education, making him a very successful man in the eyes of local culture. He could**

**have married many times over, but he will not marry an unbeliever, and until recently, believing Makua women have been rare. Our own church has been blessed of late with a number of lovely believing young women – but they are all out of Gustavo's generation!**

Though Gustavo is unmarried, he has many children – not his own, but belonging to his sisters. In Makua society, the uncle is responsible for providing for his sister's children, not the biological father. So Gustavo has raised many nieces and nephews, and now has six living with him whom he is seeking to rear in the admonition and nurture of the Lord. Gustavo is one of our regular preachers and one of those members with a large arsenal of memorized scripture always at hand.



*"Uncle Gustavo" with three of his six charges*

**Timoteo Bila** – Bila is a recent addition to the church from two years ago. God brought this treasure to us all the way from the capital, Maputo, 1300 miles away. Bila has an Assembly of God background and remains charismatic re: spiritual gifts, but in doctrine and practice is more at home in our church than in the churches of his origin.



Bila has a college education and came to the doctrines of grace through discovering them while looking for good Christian writings on the Internet. It took time, but he became convinced of what the Bible taught on these matters, then started a movement to persuade others through seminars and Bible schools.

**Bila founded Mission Ekklesia to strengthen the church in Mozambique by promoting the solas of the Reformation, has written and published an 80 page catechism for Mozambican churches on the doctrines of grace, and most recently launched a theological journal. He is a thorough and scholarly stu-**

dent of the scriptures, which puts welcome pressure on me to function at the same level. He preaches regularly in our church, always employing an expository, exegetical method, something I have not encountered in other Mozambican churches.

Bila recently held his first intensive seminar in Nampula where the entire book of Romans was expositied by himself and three other trusted teachers in 14 messages to over 80 participants. Over the past year he has established reading circles for church leaders

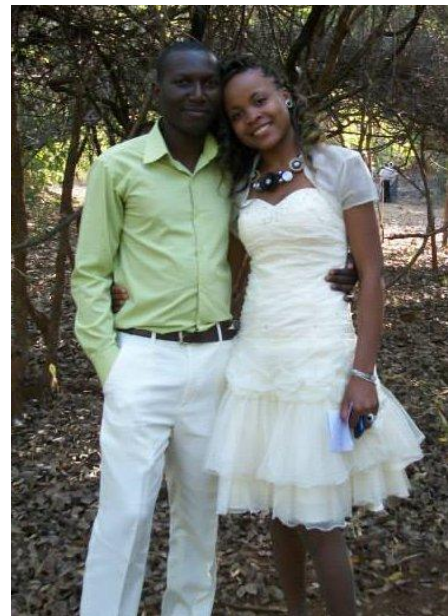


in Nampula, a plan that complements our efforts to disseminate good Christian literature through our conferences and bookstore. Through Bila's reading circles, God is acquainting us with more and more men who are hungry for the truth of God. Bila has also been placed in charge of Editora Fiel's Pastor's Library Project for northern Mozambique, distributing free literature from Fiel to more than 60 pastors throughout our half of the country.

Until recently, Bila and his wife Sara were the only couple in our church where both husband and wife were believers. They have provided an excellent model of Biblical marriage and child rearing in an African home. We have found that when foreigners provide such a model, it is not perceived as Biblical, but rather as part of the missionary's foreign culture. This largely nullifies the missionary's effectiveness as an example for those Africans who think that as Africans they must continue in the same unscriptural patterns of their ancestors while letting the foreigners follow their own customs. Biblical examples like the Bilas are infrequent in Mozambique, though they do exist, and we are thankful to have such an example in the midst of our people.

Bila is one of the three men in our congregation taking Internet courses from the International College of Reformed Theology.

**Sara Bila** – Sara is a lovely young woman and the wife of Timóteo Bila. Sara was transformed under Bila's sound Bible teaching while still a girl. Bila gave her several years to grow to womanhood and then proposed. Being a wise young woman, she was thrilled to accept! The Bila's have been married almost three years and have an adorable little girl. Sara is a keenly intelligent woman and the ideal helper in Bila's ministry. She spear-headed the women's reading club in our church and is a challenging example even to the women in my own household.



More testimonies will come in the next installment.

By His grace:  
Charles and Julie Woodrow