

Abel: Different doesn't mean damned

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“Everyone believes that the Devil deformed him in the womb,” said Abel’s father, Kanadini.

A serious silence replaces his usual cheery demeanor. A quiet strength dwells behind the smiling eyes of both Abel and Kanadini, a strength forged from years of discrimination and judgment. Abel was born with two severely deformed and brittle legs that have prevented him from walking. While children are usually viewed as an asset to a family, extra hands to help with work, Abel is completely dependent on his. Nonetheless, while the rest of the community whispers in the shadows about curses and supernatural forces, Abel’s family has buckled down to love their son with a God-given peace. They learned a long time ago that different doesn’t mean damned.



Abel’s family isn’t a typical Nigerien family. Besides having a genetic condition giving them a unique bone structure and making them shorter than average, they are Christians in a country where less than 1% of the country believes the way they do. They are no strangers to discrimination. Due to their experiences and their faith, they love and care for Abel just the way he is. They are also provided some support by a small, but connected, Christian community. It was through this Christian community that Abel came to know of CURE Niger.



You see, Niger is a big country. There are 20.7 million people spread out over almost 500,000 square miles. Many of them are in remote villages that are difficult to reach. CURE wants to reach every one of these villages and heal each child the Lord has given us the ability to heal, but there's no way we can get to them all with our small staff and limited budget. To be as efficient as possible with what we've been entrusted, we do our best to mobilize this small-but-connected Christian community through a developing network of pastors. We host small conferences at the hospital where we bring together pastors from all over Niger to learn about what we do, how to identify conditions that can be treated here, and short courses on the theology behind what we do. These pastors then head home, where they intimately know the communities they serve. Now, they can identify and refer patients to CURE. This raises the status of Christianity in that community as a conduit for healing and furthers CURE's mission of healing the sick and proclaiming the kingdom of God.



On top of it all, when these pastors return home, they're turning around and hosting trainings for other pastors, and they share their knowledge and connections. What started out as a small training has grown into a network that is slowly spreading across the country! This is how Abel first heard about CURE. In what Kanadini describes as a God-ordained event, Abel's aunt was on a crowded bus. She just so happened to be seated next to one of these pastors who knew about CURE Niger. The conversation meandered from pleasantries and ended on Abel and his hardships. The pastor was able to share the hope offered at CURE Niger to Abel's aunt who then passed it onto Abel and Kanadini. The pair wasted no time and packed their bags to make the journey to the hospital.



Their community criticized their hope, questioning why they were wasting their time.

“Abel will always be deformed,” they claimed.

Kanadini’s response was strong. “I believe there is a treatment because there is nothing the God Almighty cannot do.”



To date, Abel has received two surgeries at CURE Niger with more scheduled. The first surgery was to correct an old, untreated broken leg. The second began correcting his congenital deformities. It’s a long process with a lot more work left to do, but both Abel and his father are all smiles. The chance interaction between Abel’s aunt and the pastor on the bus nurtured the Christ-planted seed in their hearts. Since arriving at our doors, that seed has blossomed into hope for the future!

To learn more about Abel and his latest treatment at CURE Niger, go to cure.org/curekids/niger/2015/05/abel/.