



EYES ON THE PRIZE



In a spontaneous burst of excitement, cheers rang out as students mobbed their classmate with jumps and hugs. I took a second to breathe in the moment, to glance around the classroom, and recognize my good fortune to bear witness to this joy. I was standing in a sixth grade classroom in Kenya, part of a lovely ICCM school on the sloping, green hills of Kericho. I had come with a few friends to introduce Bible Quizzing to ICCM's School KY850.



We explained the scoring system and the elusive "quiz out." In team competition, when an individual answers five questions correctly, he or she has "quizzed out" and must sit out for the rest of the round. It's a great accomplishment, and the children in Kericho were eager to witness it.

As the children took turns answering questions, it became clear that one boy had a special talent for this. Waiting in breathless anticipation, the other students could barely sit still as they watched him compete. With each question he answered correctly, they counted down and leaned closer to him, crowding each other for the front row seats. On his fifth question, I had barely uttered the word "correct" before the joyous celebration erupted all around me. It was one of the best moments I've ever witnessed!

As we drove back to Nairobi, I was still smiling, remembering the kids greeting me with excitement and singing out my name. To my American eyes, the humble benches, tin roofs, and cement walls might seem poor and primitive, but I was able to see the school for all of its beauty and life. The attentive students, dedicated teachers, and brightly painted fences left an impression of growth, development, and hope for the future.

The next day, I had the great pleasure of organizing and Quiz Mastering a competition for two ICCM schools in Nairobi: Kibera (KY700) and Kawangware (KY600). The children had been faithfully studying in preparation. This



was their first official competition, and they were excited and nervous to challenge each other. Younger children piled in to watch. Excitement tittered and burst with the ebb and flow of competition all day.

The children constantly surprised me, surpassing my expectations and illustrating their sharp minds. They were eager to learn and noticeably improved as the day went on. Several kids shone brightly and lit up the room with their speed and accuracy. I was equally swept up in their enthusiasm and enthralled with the competition.

One of the most exciting parts of the day was the Team Competition final. It had all come down to the last question. It was the perfect kind of competition: well coached, evenly matched, and down to the wire. Tension was in the air. The teams had been neck and neck throughout the round, but Kawangware's best quizzier had quizzed out. Students and teachers watched anxiously. All of the Kibera students celebrated loudly when their school claimed the top prize. *Continued on p. 2*





My favorite part of the day was Individual Finals. Eighteen students competed individually. The top two winners of each preliminary round were sent to the finals. Morgan, the top quizzer from Kawangware, was intensely serious and focused on the task ahead.



Morgan

While observing all day, I had a pretty good idea which students were the top competitors. Clearly Morgan was a star. He was the only quizzer who could confidently complete pre-jumps, and his light was almost always the first one up at the end of the question. I had no doubt that he would quickly quiz out, and he did. When he clinched first place, the audience hardly reacted in surprise or glee; they had known he would win. It was still great!

After Morgan was out of the round, competition really picked up. All five remaining quizzers got on the scoreboard. We had a three-way tie for second place, which launched us into overtime. The other quizzers exited, leaving three students alone. The final three kids were Albert, Belinda, and Laswell, the

top quizzer from the winning Kibera team. Having watched him earlier in the day, I fully expected that Laswell would take Second Place, but Albert quizzed out in overtime. He positively gleamed in the excitement of his success, quickly racing to my table to shake my hand. His smile stretched so widely across his face, it quickly inspired a matching one on mine.

We still needed to determine Third Place. Secretly, I was hoping that Laswell would win. With just one more question needed, he accidentally pre-jumped. When I stopped reading, his eyes pleaded with me to ignore the pre-jump and keep reading, but I couldn't break the rules. Nervously, he went to the microphone and completed the question correctly, to his own surprise. When I told him to proceed, the words spilled out of his memory. At my response of "correct," he looked dumbfounded and the audience exploded in cheers and joy. There was more excitement in watching him achieve Third Place than there had been all day!

Laswell represented something to me. He had all the skills and knowledge to succeed, but he ran into tough times and got visibly discouraged. When he jumped on the last question, he showed no sign of confidence, yet he instinctively uttered the correct response. Why were we

all so invested in this final answer and his achieving Third Place?

I think Laswell is symbolic of the students in Kibera and Kawangware. They have all the potential and talent to succeed in life, but they encounter a lot of tough times. They

have parents, teachers and sponsors who pour love and support into them, but it doesn't always guarantee a tangible reward. So when they do reach achievements, their celebration is rich in joy, even if it is not a "First Place" win.

The children also show a remarkable support of one another. They genuinely celebrate each other's successes. A success for one is a success for all. It follows the Biblical model: "If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it."

The Kenyan children taught me so much. I feel so privileged to have glimpsed their lives. The future of Bible Quizzing in Kenya is entirely up to the Kenyans. The teachers will carry it forward. The students who take the time to study Scripture will keep quizzing. If the support of one another that I witnessed is any indication of the future, Kenyan Bible Quizzing will live for a long time and impact many lives. I know for certain that it has already affected at least one, and for that I am grateful.

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