

Native to the country, the coffee bean is Ethiopia's no. 1 export. Coffee sales worldwide support about 15 million of the country's citizens. The beloved beverage is served after every meal and often after snacks.

There are many societal disparities between men and women in Ethiopia. Young women experience a high risk of violence and early marriage (Approximately 50 percent are married by age 18). In addition, women struggle to gain access to education and are half as likely to be employed.

Access to clean water and proper sanitation is a challenge. Approximately 61 million Ethiopians cannot easily access clean water, and 65 million live without quality sanitation systems.

The term "yilugnta" expresses the selflessness and hospitality that Ethiopians live out, both individually and as a community. This is important for it reflects their honour-based Ethiopian culture.

## Weigh In

- An Ethiopian "coffee ceremony," which involves turning unprocessed coffee beans into finished cups of coffee, can take three hours. The event is a special time of communing with one another. How would you assess the relationship between coffee and community in Ethiopia? What does this reveal about the importance of community? How painful would it be if you were excluded from your community because you love Jesus?
- The world Jesus was born into also marginalized women. Counter to culture, Jesus treated women with respect in bold ways and, by example, taught us to do the same. What inferences are reasonable to make about how women are treated in Ethiopian society and the country's overall understanding of Christ?
- Think about your family's access to clean water and proper facilities. List five things you would do differently, or couldn't do, if you had little or no water coming from your taps.
- Is Ethiopia's *yilugnta*-influenced culture reflected in Canadian culture? Look up Philippians 2:3-4 and read the Apostle Paul's instructions. What do you think motivates people in Ethiopia to treat each other well? If honourable treatment is based on accepted norms, what does that mean for Christ-followers? What impetus do Christians have to treat people well?

## One Way

The *salah* – a ritual Muslim prayer – is practised daily at five specific times. While Muslims are encouraged to attend a mosque (Muslim place of worship) for each prayer time, they are required to gather for Friday noon prayers. During each prayer time, the believer must first face towards Mecca in Saudi Arabia; and then must stand, bow, prostrate themselves and, finally, sit – all while reciting specific prayers and passages from the Quran. These prayers and rituals are intended to remind every Muslim of their God (Allah), to put their lives in perspective, and to remember the final judgement.

On the other hand, Christians are called to pray in the Spirit on all occasions (Ephesians 6:18) and to meditate on God's Word day and night (Psalm 1:2). Like Muslims, we don't want to let our daily routines, fears or worries distract us from God. However, we can't do this on our own, nor could we ever do it well enough to earn our salvation. That's why we need the help of the Holy Spirit to remember Scripture and God's many promises to us. Our Heavenly Father's love for us is so great, He willingly sent His Son Jesus, who sacrificially died on the cross, to save us from sin and provide us the gift of eternal life.

## Way Out

Did you know that Ethiopia is one of the world's oldest countries? It has long been a Christian nation, ruled since the fourth century by emperors and kings who professed an Orthodox Christian faith. While the country's current constitution guarantees religious liberty for all people, recent political unrest has created opportunities for attacks on Christians and their churches throughout the country. Evangelicals are sometimes pressured to join traditional Orthodox churches, and those who have converted from Islam also face potential violence and even threats to their lives in Muslim-majority areas.

Despite opposition, Christian churches are growing. However, many believers have little or no access to Bibles. In addition, there is a lack of adequate theological discipleship training available. To help meet the needs of believers in Ethiopia, VOMC's "Tentmaker" and Bible distribution projects are presently being facilitated. You can learn more about these projects by reading the information provided on the following page of this March issue.

These projects are also included in the fund listing of the ministry's website, namely categorized as the *Relief & Development* fund (which includes the "Tentmaker" projects) and the *Bible* fund.

## Recommended Read

*With Two Hands: Stories of God at Work in Ethiopia* by Rebecca Davis, part of the *Hidden Heroes* series.

Please note that there was a typographical error on page 10 of the February 2023 issue. The statistical statement should read: "Comparatively, the land mass of China is slightly smaller than Canada, but its population is almost 40 times (not 4) that of our country." We are sorry for any inconvenience this may have caused you.