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LITTLE HOPE TO HOPE OVERFLOWING

BY EZRA SHIMABENGA '23

After high school, my family and I moved to a different town, where my father worked as an evangelist for the Evangelical Mission Baptist Church of Zambia. I was applying to a university in Zambia when I heard of opportunities to apply to universities abroad. The first time I heard about Cedarville University was from Mrs. [Rachel (Mayo)] Chambers '78 who, together with her husband, [Jim Chambers '78], had attended Cedarville before becoming missionaries to Zambia through Grace Baptist. I mentioned to her my intention to apply to schools mainly in India, Australia, and the United Kingdom, and she mentioned Cedarville University. I remember her saying, "I wish there was a way you could go there."

Months later, a family from the United States came to visit the Chambers and while conversing over dinner, Mrs. Chambers brought up the idea of me attending Cedarville University. I don't quite remember the details of the discussion, but the next day I was sitting in the dining room filling out the first page of the application. To be honest, I had little hope it would amount to anything because everyone I knew thought getting into a university in the U.S. was nearly impossible, so I poured all my attention into my other applications. Unfortunately, all of them fell through. I remember sitting in the small office at the Chambers' house thinking everything was over. And then, I opened my email and there was a message confirming my admission to Cedarville University.

We did not know where the finances would come from, but we trusted and prayed. However, as time went by, my faith began to dwindle. I accepted the fact that I wasn't going to be able to attend Cedarville. Sometime later I got the admission packet from the University, and in it was a certificate for the International Student Grant; later I received an email informing me I had been offered another scholarship: the International Faculty Excellence Scholarship. For the first time in my life, I felt like I didn't have control over my affairs. I sat and watched God provide over and over again. In the following weeks, additional funds came in and before long, everything was set.

I came to Cedarville in the fall of 2019. My first year here was probably one of the toughest times of my life. I was no longer in Zambia, and everything here was different. The people were different. The language was different. For a long



while, I felt distant from God. Then one day I was listening to a sermon in chapel, and the speaker was preaching on Psalm 13. The message was about trusting God. I remember feeling convicted because I knew I had not fully trusted God in my situation. I had let myself think my hardships were bigger than Him when they were not. I prayed a genuine prayer that night: that God would free me from my desire to control my life. Afterward, I felt like a heavy load had been lifted as I realized for the first time in my life that things are better when God is in control.

In my sophomore year I lost my father. If it wasn't for the support I got from people around me, I don't think I would still be here. During that rough time, I received so much encouragement. The community here is unlike anything I have ever experienced. At Cedarville University, help is never far away. I don't know how many times I have visited the financial aid office, but each time they are always willing to help. I am a testimony to the generosity of so many people who are willing to give for students like me to attend Cedarville University. Words cannot express how appreciative I am.

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Ezra Shimabenga '23 is a molecular biology major.