

EXPEDITION TANZANIA, AFRICA 1999

*AS TOLD
BY
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TOUCHED BY THE HUNGER

I feel really good that Henry and Randy have come. They are mighty men of God and are being used in a wonderful way. Today, each preached in different churches and I went to Pastor Masalu's church. After preaching, I arrived back at the Bishop's house and Henry was already sitting in the living room waiting on Randy and me. Henry shared about the service. He had tears in his eyes as he told me with great emotion that he has never seen hunger anywhere in the world like it is in Africa. I agreed; God is doing something very special with these people. I was blessed to see a career missionary of 27 years and a graduate of New Orleans Baptist seminary so touched by the hunger of these people. Those of you who have been here understand. I believe it is a supernatural sovereign act of God to prepare them for this mighty move that has begun.

EVENING AT MASALU'S CHURCH

I went with Henry tonight as he preached at Masalu's church, and enjoyed the messages. We had about 10 or so give their lives to Christ and many were touched by the glory as they came to the altars. It seems like the glory is already in the services even before we arrive. Many are touched as the worship starts; things have just increased. It seems like the initial release has been done. Now we wait for new levels.

A WELCOME REST & RETREAT

I feel in a sense that reinforcements have arrived, and God has told me to relax and let Henry and Randy lead for awhile. Henry told me today he is concerned I will burn out. I had not noticed the pace. When you are walking in a move like this, you just want to keep going. This veteran and wise servant of the Lord has laid a calm hand on my shoulder. Rest. There is much more to come. God has confirmed for me to rest. The summit is approaching! So I have been enjoying the time of fellowship and help. God is so good. He knows just what we need.

ENCOURAGEMENT

Pray for Zanzibar. These churches in these Muslim-dominated areas are so in need of encouragement and discipleship training. One of the things I love about Henry is he is as committed about discipleship as I am. We are truly two of a kind. Henry and I talked briefly today about how God has joined us. For what, we are not sure yet -- but we both know it. He will be leading teams after taking a year off. God is already preparing those who will bring future teams. I can tell he and Randy are going to become frequent travelers to Africa.

IN HISTORIC ZANZIBAR

We are in Zanzibar -- what a beautiful historic town! It has a Caribbean look with an African flavor. Mix in the scent of cloves and the breezes of the Indian Ocean, and it is picture of contentment on the outside. Today it holds about 15 small Christian churches of different denominations. These churches only represent about 2% of the hostile Muslim population.

When we arrived, we were met by Pastor Kibona who was to take us to our hotel and later to our meeting with several local pastors. We were met by about 5 pastors at the Anglican hostel where we were planning to stay. After checking the rooms and prices, we decided to move to another hotel. I found later that it is the site where they once held the slaves waiting to be sold at auction. I had told the pastors to meet together and discuss the seminar while I took Henry and Randy to find a hotel.

A GATHERING MIRACLE

To my surprise, when I arrived back at the Anglican hostel where the pastors were meeting, I found 9 pastors and 3 elders representing 12 different churches. After asking a few questions, I found that over 80 % of the churches in Zanzibar were represented. I realized I was witnessing a miracle. It is normally very difficult to gather such a large percentage of pastors with little notice and very little knowledge of our ministry. I had expected maybe three or four, but to find 12 of the 15 Zanzibar churches present was astounding!

DISCOURAGEMENT TURNS TO HOPE

They wanted to know why we had come and what our plans were. It was like they were really asking, "Why has God brought you all here?" I explained about discipleship and how it could help them grow. I told them about the fruit and success we were seeing in the Tanzanian churches who had implemented the methods.

There was such discouragement in their eyes when I started. They told me they were experiencing almost no growth and were under severe persecution from Muslims. I just listened to the hopelessness in their voices and the frustration they felt. Finally they looked at me as if to say, "You had better have something good to share with us." They slowly began to feel that we were there because God had sent us and had a special message. I told them about how Jesus made disciples and built the foundation of His kingdom. I shared about the steps in follow-up and how apprenticing is so important. Slowly, as I shared, I began to see some hope creep back into their eyes.

GOD'S EXPANDING PLANS

We had come planning to spend two hours each day with a few pastors. Now here sat 12 church leaders wanting help. I asked them to tell me what they wanted. We had met from 2:30pm until 5:00pm. They told me they wanted to meet all day tomorrow, from 9:00 to 4:00. I even advanced them some money for bus fare for some of their leaders. We should have about 40 hungry church leaders for 7 hours Tuesday.

What an incredible miracle God had done! To pull together that many churches and that many leaders in a Muslim-dominated town. The hostel will serve lunch for the pastors; somehow I will work it into our tight budget. A small seminar for a few pastors has now turned into a two day seminar that has pulled over 80% of the churches of Zanzibar!

I told them this was only the foundation -- we would be back every year to work with them and alongside them to build the body of Christ in Zanzibar. If only you could have seen them when they left! Our team prayed for them tonight and tears were shed. I will not attempt to describe the hope God has already brought to them. I think of many of you who helped bring them that hope. What God has already done in Zanzibar is one of the greatest miracles we have seen.

A NEW PLACE OF FREEDOM

When the meeting was over and the pastors had left, I walked down the hall of the Anglican hostel. I noticed a sign on the wall with an arrow. These were the pens which held slaves to be sold at auction. I followed the stairs down to a tunnel-like room which opened into a small concrete room about 20 feet by 10 feet. I saw the chains and shackles on the walls. I had to bend down to walk around; the ceiling was only about 5 feet high. "Oh Lord... Oh Lord..." was all I could say, "What are you doing?" Here on top of the site of so much bondage and pain, God had planned a seminar to bring encouragement and hope. To proclaim freedom for the captives and heal the brokenhearted.

Sometimes it doesn't seem real, when God is so incredibly planning the work of His harvest. I stood in the slave pens of Zanzibar in awe of our God! Oh Lord, Oh Lord, how awesome you are!

GOD BRINGS EVERY CHURCH

The Zanzibar two day conference was a tremendous success. ALL of the 15 churches in Zanzibar were represented -- we had 36 pastors and leaders. God did a miraculous thing in pulling these leaders together.

We started the day with Randy, Henry, and I each teaching for an hour. Randy taught on having the mind of Christ, Henry taught on establishing the Kingdom, and I taught on Seeking God. It was incredible how God wove three messages together without any prior preparation. The morning session built on biblical principals to transfer the Life of Christ in our own lives to others.

THE GLORY IN ZANZIBAR

After I finished the teaching on Seeking God and receiving the glory, I had the pastors stand if they wanted to receive His glory. They all stood, then a few began to weep -- and the glory swept into the room. You could feel the presence of God suddenly increase. All the pastors seemed touched; all were worshipping, trembling, weeping and praying. Dao, our interpreter told me, "I felt the anointing of God so strong, and I really felt empowered today. I felt it stronger today than at any other time." He said, "God has changed me somehow today." Later the pastors told Dao that they were now so thirsty for God and excited about the future. God really filled them with His love and passion. It was so glorious to see them changed in two short days. Praise God!

In the afternoon sessions we took a more practical approach. Randy taught on Bible study, Henry taught on biblical church planting, and I finished with how to walk in the Spirit and on making disciples. We all struggled with the limited time, with so much we wanted to give them. This team of four -- Dao, Randy, Henry, and I -- were in such love and unity as God literally flowed through us in such a powerful way. I was so blessed just to watch what God did.

HARD TO SAY GOOD-BYE

We closed with a panel discussion time. We all fielded questions as they remember things from even the morning sessions (amazing!). Finally, it was time to pray and say good-bye. It was not easy. They had all sat back down -- they wanted more. Henry told them they had plenty to work on until we return. We will. God has already spoken to Henry about coming back. I left them my e-mail address in Dar and told them to send us any questions as they implement the things we taught them.

RESTORING THE FREEDOM

At dinner God showed me He had used us to make restitution to Africa by allowing His Spirit to purge this spot of the iniquities of the past. God had sent us to the place where many had lost their freedom. Today we pray many will be restored to the only true freedom -- faith in Jesus Christ. What a glorious thing God has done !

CHOSEN VESSELS FOR THE DAR CONFERENCE

What an incredible conference we are having in Dar es Salaam. In four years I have never done a seminar here. We have had about 50 chosen vessels from all over East Africa. That's right, ALL over Africa. One pastor came from Mbeya. He walked into the meeting and announced, "I'm from Mbeya and I'm so happy to be here." We had another dear brother from the Congo, others have come from cities all over Tanzania. It is like God has selected certain ones to come.

The teachings have been so wonderfully anointed and have hit the bull's-eye on church growth and discipleship. Henry and Randy have done great jobs and been used mightily by God. Those of you who have sent and prayed for them, you can thank God for what He has done through them. Randy taught on the Gospel this morning. He used Henry's manual and it was very anointed. I think it was the most powerful teaching he has done. God seems to be working mightily on the team, as well as through the team.

CONSUMED BY THE LORD

I was finishing the messages that lead up to the release of God's glory just before lunch. I could feel the presence of God so strong. When I spoke on giving, I told them Africans must change the way they think. I could feel the glory all over me. It felt like rain on my back. They really received the message.

Then we came to the moment of decision. I asked them to stand if they were willing to die completely to their desires and lay everything on the altar. They were committing to no longer move unless God speaks. About 40 stood and as we prayed the glory fell. Some went to their knees others began to worship and pray. They were caught up in a time of love and sacrifice, and it was acceptable and consumed by the Lord. I sensed God was so pleased with these dear servants. Their hunger and heart for God was so apparent. I walked around laying hands on them and many began to weep. Randy was in the back just worshipping with his hands raised. It was so good to see God touch these brothers.

"I GIVE YOU MY LIFE"

I stood in the front and begin to sing Hallelujah. The Lord said, "Sing you will give me your life." I told the interpreter, and he had them sing in English and then in Swahili, "I give you my life Jesus." Over and over we sang; it was so wonderful the sound of a new song.

I walked to the back of the room and admired what the Lord continues to do in Africa. He spoke, "I will do this everywhere in the world. I hold nothing just for Africa -- everyone can have my glory, if they will pay the price." The Lord was saying He had decided to pour out the glory in the world. It was up to us. Will it happen in Mobile? Or in your city? That depends on you. God has already decided; those who will make a higher commitment of death to Him will receive the glory. He is waiting on you! That is a very sobering thought -- it is all up to you!

RESTORING THE CHURCH

Today we finished the Dar es Salaam conference and it was a real blessing. We had about 53 pastors after only sending out 50 invitations, the response was amazing. There is no way I can describe what God did and revealed in this conference. When we sat and listened to what the Holy Spirit spoke through Henry, Randy and myself, we got a glimpse of the first century Church that God is restoring. It would take too long to go into now, but God showed us how discipleship and five-fold ministry is supposed to function with church leaders. It is a beautiful biblical plan and it all is established in scripture. God gave Henry some real insights

to the puzzle pieces. When we put them all together a picture emerged. I have never been more excited about the future of the church.

BONDAGE BREAKERS

The last session I taught on was forgiveness and breaking strongholds. Those of you in the Mobile discipleship groups know how God has been using this powerful teaching. Today 50 pastors were released from unforgiveness and the strongholds and bondages it produces. God led me to do this in a single group session. I have never done that, or even preached this message in Africa. I hesitated at first, until God reminded me of a good friend who went through such a group cleansing.

We closed the conference with a panel discussion with Randy, Henry and myself fielding questions. It was a great discussion as they would recall almost everything we had taught throughout the week. These dear saints are so hungry and bright. Their retention is almost supernatural. God really has his hand on them. If you are a pastor or teacher and you have never come to Africa, you have missed a blessing!

A CIRCLE OF PRAISE

As we closed, I felt God leading me to have everyone form a circle. I told them we were going to pray and worship. But first, God told me to have three people give testimonies. One pastor stepped forward and told of how he had been held in bondage from the sin of unforgiveness. He told us he had been released today; God had touched him and empowered him for ministry. He told us, "My life will never be the same." As God's glory fell on this pastor in the middle of the circle, he began to shout and pray in tongues. He shouted, "You are the good Samaritan. Many have walked by me. I was hurting, but you stopped and helped heal me." He was crying and shaken, but God had made him whole. The next pastor moved into the center of the circle and shared about how the teaching had changed him and given him a powerful strategy to grow his church. Another told of the bondage of unforgiveness that he had been freed from. While these men were speaking, the presence of God was very strong. Many had tears in their eyes -- including me. God was showing us he had done mighty things in the lives of these servants. All I could think of was that we were just part of a team, many of which are in America. To see God touch so many lives and release many into their end-time purposes was a glorious thing to behold. Today we received part of our pay. Thank you partners!

Afterwards, they took pictures and got addresses -- you would have thought it was a family reunion. In a way, I guess it was!

THE BREATH OF GOD

The three of us decided to try and get away for a few hours. We let the meeting hall and drove to the cliffs overlooking the Indian Ocean. I now call this spot "Prayer Point". Henry, Randy and I just sat looking out to sea and thanking God for what he had done. The brisk trade winds always seem to blow in here. I like to think it's God's breath blowing strength back into us. I always feel energized when I come here with the wind, the prayer, and time alone with God.

OUT OF TOUCH

Chances are, I will not be able to communicate this week as we go into these unreached villages. I have no idea what we will find. I know there will be no power and no telephones, so I will try to record each day's events and send out a message Friday afternoon. When you awake Friday morning you should find reports about the trip.

SUNDAY CHANGE

Sunday morning, when I started to preach God said, "No." I backed away from the pulpit. He would not allow me to preach about the glory. I had the church pray, and I waited on the Lord. He took me to Matthew 6; the Lord's Prayer. Twice he mentions forgiveness as he teaches the disciples to pray. I led the church in a group deliverance about unforgiveness, and it was powerful. I did not know it, but later the pastor told me they had some problems in the church. Lately, they had a hard time entering into the Lord's presence -- it broke after the forgiveness issues were dealt with. Forgiveness is a key. Prayer and forgiveness go hand and hand.

CROSS WALK DELAYED

So many little things have happened that I have forgotten to even report. We did not walk with the cross on Wednesday. It was not ready, Henry is having one built. We will walk with the cross on Monday after we return from Utete. It will be the last thing we will probably do before we leave to return home on Tuesday evening.

AIR TICKET MIRACLE

Randy was scheduled to leave a week before. He went to the airline to see if he could change his flight ticket and stay over for the Rufiji river trip. The lady at KLM just smiled and changed the ticket, and we left without any problem -- or charge for the change! That is a miracle -- there is always a charge to change a ticket. God took care of it. Praise God!

GOD'S 4-WHEEL DRIVE

We had a hard time finding a 4-wheel drive for the river trip. I felt like the Lord said, "Don't worry, I have it covered." Finally one showed up from a Christian brother, who let us have it for only \$60 a day. God continues to provide. The enemy blocks one door and the Lord opens a better one. God is good all the time.

THE RUFJI STORY

We are back and safe from the journey into the unreached Rufiji River villages. It was the most amazing display of God's power, plans and provision that I have experienced in Africa. In just four days we planted five churches averaging over 20 or more salvations in each village.

If only I could explain -- if only there were words -- to describe this incredible story God has written. When we left Dar es Salaam on Monday morning in our 4-wheel drive, I had no idea how important that vehicle would become. Some of you have heard about the roads in Africa, but no one ever told me about the ones into the Rufiji River area. After about four hours we arrived at the ferry boat that would take us across the river to the village of Utete. Our friend, Pastor Kajoka, has the only church in the entire area. After 6 hours of mud and potholes the size of large garbage cans, we arrived at the church.

WHAT AN INCREDIBLE PICTURE

The people ran out singing and playing their drums and handmade instruments as we drove up. They had been waiting most of the day for our arrival. The church was decorated with beautiful flowers of all kinds. They were all over the outside and the inside, with an arch of flowers and palms over the door. It looked like the church was blooming (perhaps a prophetic picture). The sky was filled with a red tint from the setting sun. It was a welcome only God could have put together. We came inside and all shared about why we had come. I told the story about the MAF pilot who first told me about the villages around this area. I shared how the pastor had cried in Dar es Salaam when we met, and how he told me that he and his wife had been praying for help in reaching these same villages. I began to cry -- the pastor and the team began to cry, too -- as we shared and felt God's burden for these lost people.

WE ARE RICH; WE HAVE JESUS

To understand the hearts of the Utete church people, you must realize they live in a very remote village themselves. Utete is very isolated -- especially when it rains. Roads become impassable and the river cannot be crossed by ferry. They have no hospital in Utete. Recently, a young girl had her leg broken by crocodiles and had to be taken by bicycle to the only nearby hospital, four hours away. The church has no power or telephone, but they are burdened not for themselves but for other lost villages. They tell me, "We are rich; we have Jesus." God, give the world Church such a burden.

We set our tent up just beside the church while the pastor's wife prepared dinner and tea. We sat in the dim light of the kerosene lanterns and ate and talked about what we felt God wanted us to do. We decided to go to two villages just outside Utete on Tuesday and then return back for a baptismal service and a seminar for the Utete church. Lately, when I find God's plan or strategy, I feel such a peace. It is a consuming desire to stay in that peace.

INTO THE "SUBURBS"

The next morning we got up early and headed for the first village. It was about 40 minutes deep into the jungle. Actually, all of Utete is surrounded by jungle. As soon as we arrived at the village, we stopped and a crowd gathered around. The team all took turns sharing and preaching. Most of these towns are heavily Muslim and you could feel the resistance. We spent about two hours there and one young man gave his life to Jesus. There were many others who seemed interested, but all were afraid of being persecuted. We left many tracts and gave the new Christian a Bible and Dao our interpreter took his name so he could follow up on him later.

We left and went on to the next village, then broke up into groups. Then God started moving. It was like the heavens opened. I was sharing with five young men at a small store, Henry was off praying and Randy was sharing a few huts down. I asked these men if they wanted to receive Jesus, and all five said yes, so we prayed. Then several more came up and they prayed to accept Jesus, too. I looked down the road and the pastor and Randy were talking with about 10 who were praying to accept Christ. We had been there about one hour and 21 prayed to receive Christ! One young man who owned a shop was saved and volunteered his house as a place they could meet. The pastor promised to come back Saturday and begin to disciple them. Church number one was planted!

BAPTIZED WITH THE CROCODILES

It was about 4 PM so we headed back to the church to prepare for the baptismal service. Pastor Kajoka had asked me to baptize the five new Christians at his church, and I had agreed. I asked, "Where do you baptize?" He told me, "In the river. We have to go back early to pray." I thought it was a great idea to pray before the baptismal service -- until I found out the prayer was to ask God to keep the crocodiles away! They were not kidding. So the pastor and I and five brave souls literally began their Christian lives by risking them, being baptized in the crocodile-infested Rufiji River. I was more reassured when the pastor carefully scanned the river before we waded out to our waist. I'm pleased to report that all were raised to life in Christ and we left the water quickly. We all walked back to the church through town singing and worshipping God as many villagers came out to watch. The African people find such joy in the things of God. We were all so blessed to be a part.

We came back to the church and after a short seminar, we all turned in early. Wednesday we planned to leave for the more remote villages. We had one small problem. We had a full car and we needed the pastor of Utete to go and guide us into this area. Finally, we decided Bishop Mbepera would return back to Dar es Salaam. He would cross the river by canoe and then by foot to Mkongo where he could catch a bus back to Dar. It was a sacrifice, but he was very excited and wanted us to go and do what we all knew God had sent us to do. It was raining now and I was concerned because of the roads, but all was in God's hands.

SPRINGS OF REFRESHING

We were all very tired and in need of a hot bath. But how in the jungle? The pastor took us to a bubbling hot spring nearby. It is a place of many legends. They say that certain tribes that drink this water have no disease. If a pregnant women drinks the water as tea, it is said she will have healthy babies. This geologic wonder has the most beautiful crystal clear boiling water coming out of the ground. If you put a potato in the water it will be done in five minutes. Downstream, we found a place with many round rocks and the five of us all took the most wonderful hot soothing bath. The hot mineral water seemed like such a blessing to our tired bodies. We all felt strengthened by the experience. We would need it for what lay ahead.

It is Wednesday morning and Henry is ill. It has rained all night and we are packing to leave. When you have come so far and you know God has sent you, there is no turning back. We are feeling an awesome sense of being sent by God. It is a feeling we have all felt before, but there is an intensity now.

GOD'S CHOSEN VILLAGES

I got up early for a prayer walk to pray for the villages we were headed for. The Lord surprised me by saying, "Don't pray for the villages, just praise me! It is already done! Just go and harvest the fruit. Many have already prepared the soil." The Lord also told me that as we set out for the villages, the rain would stop and Henry would be well. I shared all this with the group and they were encouraged.

We set out with only our car, sleeping bags and our tent. We had no lantern other than flashlights, and no food other than a few bananas and breakfast bars. Several times I had planned to go and buy supplies, but the Lord said no. He kept reminding me the apostles took nothing. Our destination was Maloka, the furthest village (some 150 kilometers into the jungle) and the last recorded village before the Selous Wilderness Area. Then, once we knew the roads and conditions, we would work our way back through the other villages. The Lord had spoken to the pastor about Maloka, Kilimani, and Mkongo. I had prayed and also felt these were the key villages the Lord wanted to reach. There are hundreds of little hamlets and other villages along this route, but these three are spaced almost evenly among them.

ROADBLOCK

We had gone about an hour when we realized that the roads had gotten worse. It was slow going, and the mud and water holes were of concern because if we got stuck, even a four wheel drive can have a difficult time getting free. This mud is like a peat bog and can be very slippery. The size of the holes in the road had also worsened. They seemed to be twice the size as before and my knuckles were white around the steering wheel as we inched through some of the most incredible terrain I have ever seen or imagined. Little did I know that it would get worse.

We had gone about 2 hours when we came to a roadblock. After a big stretch of mud and holes, there -- blocking the road -- was a loaded log truck with a trailer. No wonder the holes in the roads were larger! That heavy load had caused tremendous depressions in the already soft soil. Another truck had tried to pass the log truck and had gotten stuck, so now no one could pass. We stopped, and Pastor Kajoka and I got out and went up to see what was going on. The driver of the log truck told us they had been there since yesterday trying to get free. I was concerned because we had a long journey ahead and could not afford a long delay. So we told them we would pray. Within 20 minutes the log truck began to inch its way out of the mud (with trailer in tow) and moved far enough along that we could get by. God had moved that trailer out of our way after they had been trying since yesterday. We were on our way again within 20 minutes. Praise God!

NATURE'S OBSTACLE COURSE

We finally arrived at the ferry and after reaching the other side, turned to go down into the road which would take us to Maloka. The first hour the roads were not too bad and soon we arrived at the first village, Mkongo. We had traveled 40 kilometers in an hour -- not bad, considering the jungle and the conditions.

After Mkongo, things got much worse. Actually worse is not the right word. Terrible or frightening would be better. We were now traveling into one of the most treacherous and incredible obstacle courses nature could devise. Sand pits, mud, quicksand, car-sized holes, water holes and rivers all lay ahead. There was not one church in any of these villages, and it was easy to see why. This drive or journey was the hardest thing I believe I have ever had to do. I was worried at times, because I was responsible for the team and I had not had a great deal of off-road driving experience. Nevertheless, God was there every step of the way, and literally seemed to carry us through the hazards.

QUICKSAND!

We finally came to Kilimani village which was about halfway to Maloka. This was a fairly large village and we passed through. We soon came to what looked like a routine water hole with firm soil on the left side, so I went left to pass the water. As soon as I did, the car began to sink. What a terrible feeling when the tires just sink into the mud! We got out and realized I had driven into what was quicksand. It looked like regular soil but it was soft and mushy. We got out of the car and our shoes began to sink. We moved quickly out of the car, and saw that the wheels had sunk in until the car was resting on the running boards. It looked hopeless, until all of a sudden out of the bush men started showing up. In just a few minutes they were all hard at work putting sticks and branches under the tires. They pushed and pulled -- and we prayed -- until the car was freed. It only took about 40 minutes and we were on our way again. Praise be to God! Those prayers back home began to feel very important.

THE REAL THING IN KIPO

On these jungle roads it seems like you are driving forever. Everything starts to look the same. We finally arrived at a village called Kipo and decided to stop for a drink. We bought Cokes and began to witness to the crowd. Then, before we knew what was happening, a large group had gathered and were very interested. We were all sharing in turn -- Randy, Henry, and myself. There was the most intense hunger on their faces as they listened. We called for those to pray, and about 8 to 10 men stepped out of the crowd to receive Christ. One young man seemed eager and we give him a Bible and he offered his home for them to meet in. We gave them some brief instructions and promised to return the next day. We left with a church now planted in Kipo! It is an amazing thing to plant churches like the Apostles did.

WILL WE EVER GET BACK?

We were now within 20 kilometers of Maloka and the roads were getting harder because of sand pits -- holes in the road that are full of sand. When your car wheels pass through, they just sink down. Suddenly, the tires hit a sand pit and the car sank down again and we stopped. Mud is one thing -- but this sand was a much different problem. We set the car into four wheel drive again, and with what can be only explained as the power of God, the car slowly but steadily climbed out of the sand pit and we continued on. We were feeling better as we neared Maloka but the thought crossed my mind, "Will we will ever get back through this maze of jungle and road hazards?" The Holy Spirit spoke so softly. "Yes. We have much to do."

MALOKA: A READY-MADE CROWD

Finally, we reached Maloka. We had made it. I have never been so mentally drained in my life. We met with a friend of Pastor Kajoka's who was the school teacher in the village. When we arrived, we noticed a group of people standing near a soccer field playing instruments, drums and singing. We were told a soccer match was going to be played in about an hour. This was the pep rally. What a coincidence -- a crowd of people was already being gathered from many villages. We decided to wait for the match to end and then we would preach to the crowd. We decided to rest for a couple of hours. We were all so exhausted from the grueling

and stressful drive, yet somehow we were encouraged. God had carried us safely through -- and even had a crowd gathered ready for what He was about to do.

WEDNESDAY EVENING

We were waiting in Maloka for the soccer match to end, and it started to rain on the large crowd that had gathered. We prayed and just as the game was over the rain stopped, so we started speaking to the people. With the large crowd around us, I told them that God had given us a message for their village.

SPIRITUAL CONFRONTATION

Suddenly, a large, wild-eyed intoxicated man came up to the crowd and began shouting at us. He was telling the people not to listen to us -- that we were telling them lies. Henry confronted the man and pulled him aside to allow us to continue uninterrupted. It worked, and Randy began to share. Now the crowd had grown larger. Randy asked those who wanted to give their lives to Christ to come forward. No one moved. The man Henry had been distracting came back now and yelled more insults. I have been in many villages, but have never felt the resistance like we experienced here.

SOMETHING BROKE IN THE HEAVENS

Randy shared and I began to pray. "Lord, you sent us here and we are tired. This is your show, so if something is going to get done then you must do it." Immediately, something broke in the heavens. You could feel a spirit of repentance fall and people started coming forward. After the first two or three, many started pressing through the crowd. It was like they were in a hurry as they came forward for prayer. Randy prayed for about 20 to surrender their lives to Christ and I took them off to begin to disciple them. Henry was now working with another group and he had several pray to give their lives to Christ. It was so amazing. God had opened the door and many were running through.

GOD'S NEW HELPERS

I saw all was in good hands, so I left to go and start putting the tent up because it was getting dark. I was doing it by myself when one young man came over and said, "I just gave my life to Jesus -- I'm ready to work for God." I gladly welcomed God's new helper and we put the tent up together. Finally, we were done. The village teacher had brought directors chairs from the school and we were sitting in front of our tent on the Maloka soccer field marveling at what God had done. But God was not through yet.

Just then, a man walked up to us and told us he had just accepted Jesus. He handed us a lantern and told us he had taken 100 schillings out of his own pocket and put oil in the lantern. He had no idea that we were without light, except for the flashlights we carried. We marveled at how the Holy Spirit was already speaking to His new children. Henry just laughed and said, "Do you think this brother got saved tonight?" We all laughed because we knew he had.

BLESSED FOR HOSPITALITY

We had arrived at Maloka with no food except for bananas. We thought perhaps we would fast until we returned. We were tired and hungry. Then the teacher came and told us he and his wife would like us to come to their house for dinner. All they had was rice, beans and tea. It was one of the best meals I have had in Africa! So we ate our red beans and rice in the dimly lit home of this brother who had also received Jesus earlier. I was also excited, his Muslim wife had just prayed with Pastor Kajoka to receive the Lord. Praise God! They were already being blessed for the hospitality to God's servants.

We were preparing for bed when a woman brought us buckets of heated water for us to bath in. This water was very precious, every drop must be carried four or five kilometers from the river. We sat in our chairs with the lantern flickering, talking about what amazing things God was doing. That night when we lay down to sleep in the tent you could see the incredible stars in the African sky. It reminded me how good God is at making plans and providing. I slept as soundly as I ever have in my life.

AMAZED AND EXCITED

The next morning we awoke and the Lord told me to walk to the river and pray for the village and the new Christians. On my walk to the river I met many people going to fetch water and bathe. They all took the 4 mile walk for water as nothing unusual. Everyone greeted me warmly -- by now they all knew who we were.

I arrived back just before the seminar was to start and they were already arriving. This morning there were not just 20 or 25, but over thirty. Many others had come to accept Jesus as Lord. Henry and I shared with them about prayer, studying the Bible, and

beginning the Christian walk. I told them of God's provision and held up the lantern that God had given us to use. They seemed amazed and excited at how God had provided. We all joined hands in a circle and prayed. There were over thirty now, and others were coming. It is the most amazing thing when people hear the truth of the Gospel. The power, even when we had such opposition, was no match for the penetrating power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We left Maloka with many new brothers and sisters -- and the first church ever planted in this village. Pray for the brothers and sisters in Maloka!

THURSDAY

I took a deep breath as we left Maloka. Once more, the vehicle struggled as we hit the sand pits and steered around water holes. Here we go again. We seemed to be making good time as we arrived back at Kipo, where we had stopped yesterday. We got out for a cold drink and started to share the Gospel. Just like before, we very quickly had a large crowd. There were several men here who had prayed to receive Christ the other day. Randy began to share, and I felt like the Lord just wanted me to rest. So I let Randy take over the preaching as Henry did the discipling. In a short time we had another 10 or so who had prayed to receive Jesus. The church in Kipo was growing. Praise God!

Then pastor Kajoka came over to me with a young boy about 12 who had just asked if he could receive Jesus. The pastor prayed with him, but the boy told us that one of the nearby small villages had heard we came through yesterday. They told him, "If they come back, please ask them to come and tell us about Jesus." It was really hard not to give in. I wanted to start off into the jungle and witness to this village, but the Lord said, "Stay focused on what I have told you to do." Earlier in the morning the Lord told me to go only to the villages where He had already directed us. We were there to open wells. Now there were three: Kinjinga, Maloka, Kipo.

We left and started towards what felt like home. But there is more left to be done before I can leave. We finally arrived at the next village God had spoken to us about -- Kilimani, a village of about 6,000 people. We arrived and met with the chairman of the village, who is a Muslim. We told him we were there to plant a church and he welcomed us and told his assistants to call all the people to the big tree, the town square. We signed the guest book and realized God was doing another miracle, as God had the Muslim leader of the village summon all the people to hear about Jesus.

I told the crowd we had come to share a special message. Randy began to share and when he called for those who wanted to pray 20 stepped quickly out of the crowd. Henry took them off to give them Bibles and began to disciple them. Then another drunk came shouting and disturbing the group. I took him off to distract him so Randy could continue to share. This only lasted for awhile -- then he came back to distract the crowd more. I sought the Lord for direction and He told me to bind the spirit of bondage. As soon as I did this, the drunk man wandered off as if he no longer cared about what we were doing. We finished presenting what Bibles and tracts we had and promised to return. We left Kilimani, and church number four had been planted.

The drive now seemed easier. It was like the enemy had given up and we had a much easier time negotiating the road hazards. Maybe it's all the practice I have had! It certainly seems like a lifetime of training in a few days. We finally arrived at Mkongo, the last village God had spoken to us about. Mkongo is just across the river from Utete. From here, Pastor Kajoka would leave us and take a canoe back to Utete, but first we had one last church to plant. The Lord had already told me we were not to strive to do this - - He had already done it, we were to just pick the fruit.

We met the pastor's sister and husband who were the only Christians living in Mkongo. They agreed to help as we all headed down to the marketplace. As we pulled up, it didn't take long to gather the crowd. Randy began to share the Gospel and when he gave the altar call almost everyone in the crowd (about forty) stepped forward. I stepped forward and reinforced the fact that they were surrendering their lives to Jesus. All nodded their heads in agreement. Randy led them in prayer, which made over 120 who had given their lives to Christ in five different villages. Amazing what God will do when we find His plan. We hugged the pastor who, with his sister and her husband, will do the followup. He would spend the night in Mkongo before going on to Utete. The team piled into the car and started back to the main road and Dar es Salaam. It is done! God had already done it! We went and harvested His fruit and now there are five new churches in the unreached Rufiji River villages.

We saw few miracles of healing -- no dead were raised physically -- but many spiritually. We did see perhaps the greatest miracle since I have been coming to Africa. We saw the kingdom advancing the way Jesus taught his disciples to do it. One village at a time, planting churches in homes where these new baby Christians will grow because of the closeness home fellowships provide.

Next week, I will send Dao, my interpreter back to this area. I now have two field assistants in Tanzania that I will support. I have promised Dao by faith I will support him, along with Ralph Mrope. They have a heart for God and a burden for the lost. The work must go on as I return home. The job God has given me here is too big now for just me. So God has sent me willing

laborers. Dao will return next week with a case of promised Bibles and discipleship materials to strengthen the harvest. Pray for us as we plan and prepare. God has blessed me with two wonderful assistants that love God, discipleship, and feel God has sent them to me. I welcome them as I do you who have joined with us to reach the lost in Africa.

TUESDAY

It is Tuesday morning. We are scheduled to leave today. By God's grace we will walk with the cross. This is Henry's burden. God has given us favor with officials. They had refused permission for us to walk yesterday. Today they gave us an escort and allowed us to walk past the State House, and pray for the nation of Tanzania. The work is done. We're already counting the hours until 11:30pm and getting on that plane.

EPILOGUE

It has been a glorious journey through Africa this year. Your prayers and encouragement have made this a remarkable adventure as God has moved in an unprecedented way. Words will not describe my love and appreciation for each of you. The hardships and sacrifices, such as leaving a family behind, are not always reported because it is part of the price I'm willing to pay. So many times when I prayed for an answer or needed my spirits lifted, one of you would send an e-mail that would do just that. If only I could make you understand how much a part you have been of what God has done here -- but I cannot find the words. I pray somehow in God's infinite wisdom He will let you know.

PREPARATION: NOT BUSINESS AS USUAL

We left Mobile in May. Many words were spoken about a mighty move of God that was waiting to break out in Africa this year. Several of our prayer intercessors even told me it would be the May/June not the February/March trip. As many of you know, God had spoken to me on the February/March trip about moving to Nairobi next spring. When the first team left Mobile, there were several powerful prayer meetings (two in particular) which made us aware that we were moving into a new season. The first, the Monday morning discipleship group, was so strong the week before we left, that many were weeping and crying as we experienced the first drops of His glory being poured out. The second meeting was at one of the team members' houses. We had begun to pray, when the presence of God showed up in a very powerful and special way. The last month before we left, several of our team spent a great deal of time studying about His glory. It had become a passion, a burning desire that I now realize He had put in us. One of the team even felt led to bring colored banners, which represented different aspects of God's glory. Along with MorningStar's Glory CD, which someone felt impressed to give me before I left, we headed to Africa with a sense of anticipation. All of this led us to believe that when we arrived in Nairobi, Kenya it was not going to be business as usual. These early indicators were signs God was sending to prepare us for what He was planning to do.

NAIROBI: OVERWHELMING GLORY

Team one arrived in Nairobi with a few days to relax and recover before we would begin preaching and teaching. We actually never got to relax, because we were immediately consumed in what can only be described as a visitation of His presence that overwhelmed each of us. We felt His presence so strongly that walking became difficult and at times impossible. We would walk into rooms or even in restaurants and His presence would be so strong we desired to lay on the floor. God is such a perfect planner; he had prepared me for all this with several special visitations over the last year or so. I knew what was happening and it allowed us all the peace to enjoy what He was doing. I can remember so many powerful outbreaks of His glory. There was the Nairobi pastors conference, where God's presence was so strong it felt like rain on your back. The Sunday morning at Agape Fellowship in Nairobi where I preached under an anointing which was the most powerful I had ever experienced. It took great effort to just stand at the podium. The words coming out of my mouth felt like swords of fire as many were left stunned, weeping and amazed. The praise and worship that day was like heaven had come to earth. It was here that I first started dancing.

ARUSHA: POWERFUL DISPLAYS

The Arusha meetings were probably the strongest displays of his glory I would witness. In one seminar as I walked to the front of the stage and lifted my hands in prayer, asking for the release of His glory, it exploded in the most incredible way. I will never forget one of the team members' faces as we both were in awe as we witnessed what God was doing. The anointing was so strong people would fall instantly when touched. So many beautiful prophetic words confirming God's love and desire for His children to walk in His glory. God's presence grew so strong as the one dear sister sang prophetically, it felt like Jesus himself had come into the room. I can still remember the tears that came into my eyes as she sang.

DAR ES SALAAM: IT CONTINUES

It continued in Dar es Salaam, and in every meeting in Africa. Sometimes it was stronger than others, depending on the hearts of the people. God was so faithful as he led and shared about what it takes to receive His greatest blessing -- Himself, His glory. Those dear pastors in Dar, who wept as they were released from the chains of the bondage of unforgiveness, God is so good. We have such great authority if we will walk with Him.

RUFIJI: HIS PLAN, HIS WAY

The Rufiji trip was a high-water mark of my life and ministry as five churches were planted in the Muslim coastal regions of Tanzania. It was an historic event never before done, so they tell me. It was all accomplished because of our determination to do His plan, His way. It always works when we follow Him. So many hungry souls in those villages and the tremendous resistance we have faced as a result. Praise God for the threats now being lodged at me as I remain in hiding until I leave Dar es Salaam. We have stirred the enemy, but the signs of the victory in Jesus are all around. The Lord has told me, "I will give you these unreached Muslim coastal areas. You have my authority to take them for my Kingdom." What incredible times we live in. There are so many wonderful things God wants His children to do and walk in. What a glorious Lord and Savior we have.

NO PRICE IS TOO GREAT

I feel sad when I leave Africa every year, even when I know I will return. This year there is a small bit of sadness, but it is now far outweighed by what lies ahead. The Lord is opening the world to release His glory. It will continue. I declare the words He has given me, "The latter rain has begun." To those of you who have read these words, fall on your face, remove any obstacle -- let nothing stand in your way as you approach His altar. No price is too great. There is nothing that compares to the experience of standing in the GLORY OF THE LORD. May God grant His people mercy and release HIS GLORY!

Proclaiming His glory until He comes!

Steve Gray

IF YOU HAVE BEEN BLESSED BY THIS REPORT, YOU MAY WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT LIVING THE VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIFE AND EXPERIENCING GOD'S GLORY. IF SO, CONTACT US AT OUR EMAIL ADDRESS (basic@basicministries.com) OR WRITE TO US AT
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