

# Zambia Newsletter

## Zambia Missions

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We have now all returned back to Zambia (last month) and are busy preparing for the start to a new school year at Mapepe (Jan 9). Thankfully, we did not find any major problems to deal with upon our return as in previous years.

### **The Most Important Priority: Prayer.**

I would like to begin this New Year by sharing with you something that I have come to believe is the most important component of our work here in Zambia. We have now been here just over 7 years and it is amazing how much we have had to learn about how to do God's work in this culture that is so different from our own. Despite my years of training and previous experience, I am amazed at how much I didn't understand. All my years of training (education) and experience was very important as it provided the necessary foundation for me to learn what I otherwise might have remain hidden from my understanding. This is why I believe long-term missions is so important. The most important things one learns in missions come through years of experience. There is no other way. With each passing year we become more and more effective in doing what we are trying to accomplish here in Zambia.

Yet, as important as this preparation and experience is to successful/effective mission work, it all pales in comparison to what God can do through us in response to our prayers. I have been involved in mission work most of my life and I have seen a lot of missionaries, some well prepared and some horribly unprepared. I have seen mission works that are woefully ill-informed and culturally inappropriate, and I have seen efforts that have been based on the best methodology and mission philosophy. And, yes I have seen many of these poorly thought-out mission efforts fail miserably as I expected. But, what has come to amaze me through the years is that God has often accomplished great things through the most ill-prepared and most uninformed mission efforts and missionaries while some of the best mission works (and missionaries) have accomplish very little!

Why the difference? Why does God sometimes bless the efforts of the least-prepared while the efforts of the best-prepared seem to go nowhere? Truly, God's ways are not man's ways. In many ways God continues to remain a mystery to us. Predicting what God will or won't do is not beyond us. God will be God and He

seldom conforms to our standards. But, I think I know the answer to this mystery as to what determines success. One factor has to do with the receptivity of the soil. And, while I think the quality of work we do does play a factor, I am convinced that success does not depend on human strength (effort) and wisdom (knowledge), but on God and His power. In the end, it is not about us, it is all about God and His glory! We do play a part, but it is a small part.

Does not the Bible say, "God humbles the proud but gives grace to the weak"? Paul's basic point in 2 Cor is that God displays His power in weakness, not in human strength. The worldly thinking of the Corinthians had them giving glory to those men who impressed them with their wisdom, rhetorical abilities, and impressive letters (resumes). Paul was none of these and, thus, many were turning from Paul to listen to those who had "credentials." But, Paul argues that God chooses not use the "strong" to accomplish his will. He uses the "weak" (humble), for it is through the weak (humble) that God is able to display His glory and power (2 Cor 4). If God worked through the strong, then men would put their faith in men and worship (follow) them instead of God. Instead, God displays his glory through the weak (humble) so that men might know that it is God who has done great things – not man. Thus, Paul says, "when I am weak, I am strong; but when I am strong, I am weak."

So, whatever God does or does not do through our work here in Zambia, it will have little to do with our ability, wisdom, and hard work! Yes, we have a role to play in the mission of God; and, yes, there are some works that are better conceived than others (and some missionaries that are better prepared than others). And, while God can certainly use our hard work, He can also just as easily use the efforts of anyone. It is NOT about us!

So, what does make the difference between success and failure in missions? It is God and His power (glory)! Yes, we must work hard and do the best we can using the best methods we know; but it is God who gives the increase. The human component is humility (total dependency and faith on God to provide what we need and seek). And, more than anything else, humility is demonstrated by prayer. Those who are "strong" spend little time in prayer because they are too busy trying to accomplish great things by human effort. The "weak," however, devote great amounts of time to prayer because they know it is God who determines success or failure. And, when God does accomplish great things, the story they tell is a story about "what great things God has done." The "strong," on the other hand, tell a story about what all they have accomplished (e.g. "Look what all I have done!"). It is ultimately about God's glory.

Thus, the most important thing that you (as our supporters in this work) and I can do is to devote ourselves to prayer about this work. Our prayer is simple: "God, we ask you to bless our humble efforts here in Zambia and to use our 'offering' (works of service) to save (redeem) our fellow, human beings from the darkness (oppression of evil) for your glory."

### **Report: Mapepe Bible College.**

The new semester begins next Monday (Jan 9). We are expecting 20 new students that Kennedy Mukuka has recruited and 20 who are being sent from George Benson Christian College (Namwianga Mission) who will later go through the college there in order to get a teaching degree (which will enable them to be self-supporting).

We also have 8-9 returning students who have been invited to go through our "Missionary Training Program." These are the best of our past students in whom we want to provide more intensive training over the next three years so that they might be sent out as missionaries in Central Africa. A great deal of this training will focus on spiritual formation and practical ministry training under Thomas Simubali.

### **Arrival of New American Co-Workers.**

On Jan 5 we welcomed the arrival of Greg Swindle. Unfortunately, his wife (Mary) is going to have to remain in the USA in an effort to sell their house. Greg will be focusing on three areas: teaching, spiritual mentoring, and practical ministry training for our students. I would ask that you all begin

praying for Greg and Mary as this is a major transition for them, especially with Mary having to remain in the USA for a while longer. Please pray that their house will sell very soon (so Mary can join Greg here in Zambia) and pray for their successful transition to life here in Zambia (cultural adjustment).

Then, on Jan 12, we welcomed the arrival of Dixon and Flash Settle from Wilmington, NC. Dixon and Flash have just recently retired and are coming to Zambia with a one-year commitment to help us in the work. Dixon has extensive experience in business and project development and Flash has served as a school teacher and administrator all her life. They will bring some much need experience and organizational skills to our work here. Of course, we have hopes that they will want to stay in Zambia beyond one year. Please pray for their successful transition to life here in Zambia as well.

My son, Stephen, has agreed to return to Zambia to serve as our CEO (i.e., to take on all the business and administrative responsibilities so that Thomas, Lorie and I can focus more on the spiritual side of our ministry). Stephen (who is now 30 years old and has business experience and knowledge) did a great job in this role last year (unofficially) and so he will now take on this job "officially."

This now gives us a great deal more manpower so that we can now devote ourselves more effectively to staff development and the areas of ministry that have suffered as we have all been so over-extended. We have every reason to believe that this is going to be a GREAT year for our work here. Please pray that God will bless our efforts this coming year!

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### **Lorie's Reflections.** (New Year's Day—The Lord's Day)

There was a still darkness outside the picture window. Unexpectedly, the silence was broken by the voice of one lone bird in the evergreen tree. Almost immediately the bird was joined by a chorus of birds chirping warning. Then the rain began to tap out it's rhythms on the tin roof of our house. The rain fell gently at first then in deafening torrents. The sound of the African rains covered up the gentle sounds of the birds for a moment.

I couldn't help but reflect on how the torrents of "life troubles" and the noise of each day's everydayness can momentarily mask the "new mercies" which the Lord sends to us as His blessing for the beginning of the day. At times, we can even doubt that the mercies are there. But we must wait patiently and listen...

The rains tapered off to a gentle tapping again. There was a brief moment of silence followed by an even more impressive symphony of birds. Their voices heralded the calm after the storm. They had survived; their nests were still clinging to the branches of the tree which had been tossed about during the rain. At that very moment, the sun peaked over the hill and splashed the sky with rich colors. He had calmed the storm.

We serve a Father who will be with us through the storms of life and even more than that He will give us the strength to survive even when life becomes deafening. He is the rich colors of His sunrise. He is our rock. He is our fortress. He is the one who helps our "nests" to cling

to the branches when darkness threatens us. Remember in this new year to cling to Him through the storms and glorify Him even in the darkness. What a blessing to be His child.

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We rejoice with our sister, Ennes (the widow of our beloved William Siang'andu, who has been working with our women's ministry for several years). On Saturday 14 th of January she became Mrs. Muetwa in a ceremony here on campus. Our prayers and blessings are with her as she continues to serve the Lord...but no longer alone!

