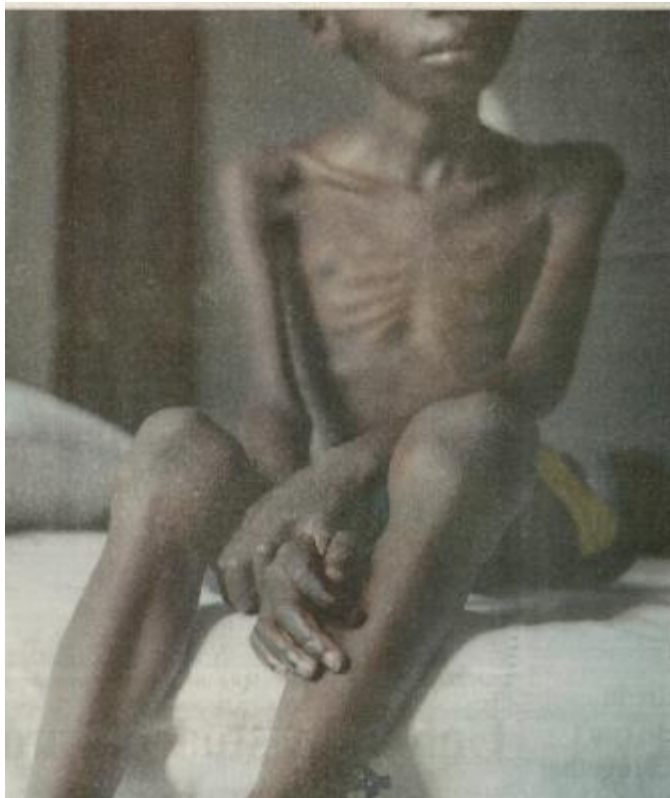


AFRICAN ANECDOTES -- APRIL 2010



For years I have struggled, mostly unsuccessfully, to get mothers to teach their children. I have written material and had it translated into African languages, but somehow only a few women have ever used the lessons, perhaps because many do not have Bibles, perhaps because the material lacks something, perhaps because they are lazy. But I'm still trying!!!! The past two times we went to Zimbabwe, I asked Les to allow me to print the book of Mark and give to EACH woman in her own language (Venda/ Ndebele/ Shona) so at least she has *something* of God's word to put in her heart. I hoped to motivate the women, who are always nagging for Bibles, by telling them that the booklet was sort of like a test – if they were faithful in a small thing, maybe God would help them with something bigger, like a Bible. On this trip I again saw a few (about 30) of the women to whom I had given the booklets. NOT ONE had read it – not even as much as one chapter. “We have been busy in the fields,” they said. “Were you too busy to eat, sleep, wash your face?” I

asked. A few weeks before we went to Zimbabwe, the picture (left) appeared on the front page of the Johannesburg *Star* (March 5,2010). This 7-year-old boy, weighing just 28 pounds, is a victim of AIDS. The sad thing is that the ARVs which would enable him to live a normal healthy life are available, but he is in this skeletal state due to the alleged laziness of the doctors and nurses at the clinic and hospital where he was taken. Fortunately for him, a good neighbor knew of a charity organization that took the boy in and saved his life. Can you guess what's coming? I used the picture to pull a “Nathan” on the women. (2 Sam. 12:1-7) I got them all indignant at the medical personnel and then told them that their children look just like this child – *spiritually* – and for the same reason – *laziness*. SO....the women, bless their hearts, *tried hard* to follow my teacher-training lesson and nine volunteered to try to teach a lesson from the book of Mark after lunch. From the ingenuity of their survival strategies I *knew* they had everything it takes to be effective, creative teachers.

First this teacher taught by drawing a picture on the board (Les provided me with chalk and small blackboards for each congregation). In case you can't guess, Jesus is getting out of a boat -- it is the story of the demoniac in Mark 5. Then this teacher got a friend to pretend to be one of the students and act out the story. The friend transformed her head covering into a beard and got a real fearsome look on her face! The teacher is holding a prop (stone) in her hand.



“Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!” (Dt.5:29) But they have SO MUCH to overcome! Culture -- poverty – lack of education. It took me several hours to get the women at Joko (left)



to agree to allow their daughters to marry when *half* of the lobolo is paid – and I’m afraid half is still too much to keep from forcing their daughters into fornication. Culture! On Friday morning I finished a bit before Les so I took the opportunity to encourage the women to be tested for HIV and stress how to live with HIV, since I could see some were obviously HIV+. Afterwards one of the women came to me, pregnant with her 5<sup>th</sup> child. She went to the local clinic and, without

asking permission, they tested her for HIV and informed her that she is HIV+. She needs to travel 60kms to the nearest hospital to get the ARVs to prevent mother-to-child transmission but has no money. Poverty! Her husband has been too ill to work for the past 2 years. It should have been *obvious* to her that her husband was HIV+. Lack of education!

I had a very difficult time teaching here at Joko because I feel I have no right to be on this property, so obviously a loved homestead, but violently wrested from its owner. The sight of the pile of bones of the farmer’s dead animals is so depressing. BUT an unselfish school teacher brought something good to this scene of evil and greed. In the rest of Zimbabwe, teachers are striking for more pay -- not that the teachers are greedy, they only want more than \$150 per month! But here at Joko, I heard a voice teaching the

children – and it’s even a holiday! Last time we were here, the children had to write their essays with chalk on the floor. This time Save the Children has donated paper and pens, (no text books or desks yet!) and the teacher has redoubled his efforts to stuff as much as possible into his students since none of them will ever be able to afford high school. He must get overwhelmed, just like I do, wondering if our little drops in the



bucket are going to make any difference to the sea of humanity – but he keeps trying – and so must I! Especially as I have Someone this teacher does not have and the consequences are eternal!

One thing the women in the Beit Bridge area do to survive is to unravel gunny sacks (now made of plastic) and wrap the threads around dried grass to make beautiful baskets with all kinds of ingenious designs – so reminding me of the Proverbs 31 woman! I try to buy a basket from each Christian woman on occasion, just to help her out – and I can always find buyers here in South Africa. (Sorry, no, I can't mail them to the USA!) Last time there was such a riot of women trying to sell baskets on behalf of relatives that I refused to buy any. This time I asked the preachers at the different congregations to make a list of the women who are Christians, but there was a problem. An older sister came to me on behalf of a girl who had been baptized the day before. The preacher refused to put her on the list – said it was impossible for her to have made a basket, but the older sister told me that she knows this girl makes baskets. I called the girl and found out that this 17-year-old has been orphaned since the age of 12. Before her mother died she taught her to make baskets. She does not have to pay school fees because she is an orphan, so she swaps her baskets for clothing. And now she has been blessed by hearing the gospel! Please join me in praying that the gospel will



keep her from that very same fornication that caused her to be an orphan in the first place! Somehow I don't think I can bear to sell this particular basket!

I really want to thank the women who send extra money and/or little gifts to make the women's lives easier/better. Yes, food is the most important thing, but they also need soap for washing clothes, needles and thread for mending, and medicated soap for the various skin



diseases that abound. I also took 2000 Tylenol tablets to Zimbabwe. Each man and woman got 9! Imagine having NO pain killers available to you whatsoever. "Thank you for everything including the gifts and food you provided for us. We received them from our brother and sister Les and Linda. Thank you so much. This letter comes from your friends of Church of Christ. Thank you. From the congregations of Joko, Matshiloni, Gongwe and Safari. May God bless you and keep doing well."

Amen. With love, Linda Maydell