

NYLSTROOM SCRAPBOOK

January 2006

Dear friends

People are amazing – especially God’s people! It is a wonderful testimony to the power of God through His Word that a person can find Christians in remote areas who have had very little contact with other Christians for years – and they are still dedicated to the Lord.

We arrived at Reitz mid-afternoon on the last Thursday of December. This older couple had heard Darlington might be coming, but were not sure when. Yet, we were all welcomed with open arms. Bettie heard the gospel several years ago on a visit to Johannesburg. She taught her husband, Isaac. There was at one time one other Christian in Reitz, but he moved away several years ago. They have tried and tried to teach their neighbors and family, but to no avail. Yet they still faithfully worship the Lord in their home each Sunday. I asked her what she would like to study and she said, “I want to know what to do and say when others around me are doing the wrong things and when people I love disappoint me.” Since we were parked in front of their house, there was also plenty of time to just visit. She had never “just visited” with a white person before – and couldn’t believe how much she enjoyed herself!

Our arrival in Frankfort was also unexpected – but again the same big-hearted welcome. After lunch Emely got on the phone and phoned several Christian women – but all were busy (it was New Year’s Eve). So she said, “Excuse me, I don’t want to hear the good news alone.” Then she disappeared, only to return 15 minutes later with three neighbor women! After the study we also “visited,” much to their amazement. They started telling me stories about the old days when women were not allowed to sit on the sofa as we were doing. And they laughed when I told them how it is still that way in Zimbabwe and how the women called me “grandma” because I struggle to sit on the floor. One elderly lady told me how she was a nanny for an Afrikaner farmer’s family and how well they treated her and how much the children loved her. They took her on vacation with them back in the days of apartheid when Africans were not allowed to sleep in White hotels – but “her” family always insisted that she sleep in the same place they did. The next day (Sunday) after lunch, several of the Christian women did come for a Bible study and stayed until 6 pm, asking questions. Some of the neighbor women came again. The next morning about 7 am when I walked into Emely’s kitchen, one of the neighbor women was already there to bid me farewell. As Les started the engine of the camper, another neighbor came running full speed down the street to hug me goodbye. My heart was really so touched that their hearts were touched by a white visitor. It used to be that way in the old South Africa, but I had not experienced the desire to “connect” from African non-Christians in a long time. I have felt so many closed doors in recent years – but here was an open one! Actually there were many open doors with non-Christian women on this trip, and I pray that some of them will obey the gospel. (Just got a phone call – one woman did!)

The family at Kroonstad had really suffered at the hands of a white Christian, yet still they were completely open and friendly towards us. Joseph has done well with a taxi business and has been able to afford for all 5 of his children to attend college. The eldest son is married to a young woman he converted. The youngest child just graduated from high school. All have kept themselves pure. Neither Joseph nor his wife are educated, but they have managed to guide their children in such a way that they even defended their faith to teachers who promoted evolution and defended homosexuality. The children were all at home for the holidays and treated me like a beloved family member, telling me all about themselves and even asking advice. This conversation went on while they cheerfully washed dishes and cleaned the house – both boys and girls. They were all obviously committed to the Lord, not just going through the motions to keep their parents happy. This is an amazing success story – especially considering the typical culture of their neighborhood and especially considering that a few years ago the entire congregation fell apart due to a fornicating preacher. I asked the mother why she thought her children had turned out so well. In her very broken English she replied, “I did not just talk, I lived.” They have promised to come to the lectures in April. I hope the other Christians get to know them and gain as much encouragement as we did.

Another surprise awaited me at Welkom. We did not intend to visit these people at all – we were only given their number by someone who thought they might help Darlington contact someone else. When they heard we wanted to visit this other man they insisted we spend the night with them – “There is too much crime where that man lives – it will not be safe for you.” Then Les and Darlington had to “repay” their hospitality by letting them know they were not worshipping scripturally! What was their reaction? “I feel like Saul – the scales are falling from my eyes.” “Thank you so much for visiting us” – and they present us with a vase!

Our last stop was in the home township of Winnie Mandela. “You must not be here after dark – it is too political in this place!” Even Darlington had no idea there was a church in this place – literally a handful of people meeting in a tin shack amidst very poor conditions. I thought to myself, “This is going to be hard.” I stand rebuked: these three women were eager students, good thinkers, and had obviously been reading their Bibles. They needed the Word – their faith had been tested by fire. Sadly I discovered that my most eager pupil, Jane, was the wife of the man we went to visit and pray for before the service started – a man obviously dying of AIDS. “I was so angry with my husband...He knew he was HIV positive a long time and never told me,” said Jane, “but I went to counseling twice and they helped me a lot.” “What did they say that helped you?” “They told me to accept my HIV status, forgive my husband and look after him. He has not been out of bed for 15 months now. I took a nurse-aiding course and passed. I am hoping to get employment in this to support myself and my children (ages 13, 7 and 1). I have done everything for my husband and I am not afraid to nurse anyone. I have accepted what has happened.” Imagine caring for someone suffering like that – and knowing the same thing is going to happen to you as well – because of his unfaithfulness! This woman can teach me far more than I could ever teach her!

Again and again on this trip I was humbled by these women of faith. Would my faith survive if it was just myself and my husband worshipping alone, year after year? Would I be so gracious to a stranger of a different culture? So fearless to call my neighbors to come hear the gospel message? So thankful to the person who corrected me? So loving to my murderer?

May God bless us all to grow in faith so that we can each overcome the challenges that face us. Thank you for your prayers on our behalf and on behalf of these brethren, not forgetting our daughter Gloria who should be giving birth sometime near the end of January.

With love, Linda Maydell

