

NYLSTROOM SCRAPBOOK

June 2006

I have been praying a long time for a medical doctor to come with us to Zimbabwe, and at last my prayers were answered. There are many places in Zimbabwe where there is no medical help or even medicine. Kevin is a humble person who, in far less than ideal conditions, compassionately treated nearly every member of each congregation. (In typical African fashion, what one person gets, all must get.) He also went the extra mile – like literally pulling teeth! Furthermore Kevin was willing to answer my questions and even tell me some simple remedies that I can pass on to the women. There was a lot of TB (because so many with AIDS have active TB, which is highly contagious). I was surprised at the amount of pneumonia and low-grade kidney/bladder infections. However, something very impressive to me was what they did not have: cancer, diabetes, and heart-disease. I know it was very hard on the wives of Kevin and Gerry for them to give up their husbands, but I truly believe that people are physically alive today because of Kevin's visit -- and people are spiritually alive today because of Gerry's visit. As always, we were encouraged by the brethren in the congregations in Zimbabwe that we visited; for example, one brother and his wife walked 40 miles to attend the meeting.

Namibia is a rectangular country that is about 1000 miles long and 500 miles wide, mostly desert and sparsely populated except for a strip of land next to large rivers on the northern border. In this physically and spiritually harsh land, a few scattered Christians are struggling to survive. Many are Christians as a result of campaigns by World Bible School, but the duplicity of some of these people has battered their faith. One group in the squatter camp of Windhoek is the result of an effort by an American preacher, no longer there, who baptized many people – but did not insist that they repent first. More than one visiting preacher has described Namibia as a “Corinth” of a place. Notice that the public service signs below do not encourage abstinence, but “safe” sex.

To be honest, I was actually dreading the trip to Namibia. I had heard that there was sin in the lives of some of my dear sisters – and I just didn't feel adequate to respond to that. The same was true of Les and the brothers. The last time we went to Namibia, Les and I were alone – and this time we were so happy to have extra council (Gerry) with us. I do not know how strong I would be if I were a member of a tiny congregation where there was a lot of sin – fornication, marital strife, unfaithful attendance. I do not know how strong I would be if my husband beat me (one sister) or was trying to murder me (two sisters), or if I was a single woman, lonely, vulnerable (most of the sisters). Yet, when a sister succumbs to temptation, I – who have never “walked in her moccasins” – need to confront her for the sake of her soul and try to encourage her to do right. This was the SOOOO difficult part of our journey. One young sister “closed” her face when I spoke to her (you can see their faces close), but hugged me when I left and begged me to come back. “We are getting used to you.” One sister I always thought of as “a mother in Israel” publicly praised my teaching on purity – but “closed” her face when I spoke to her about her own purity. That is a terrible heart-ache to me.

Nevertheless, there were times when I saw sisters who seemed to me to have grown incredibly since I last saw them. One sister cried as she expressed to us her seemingly vain efforts to try to help the weak in the congregation – yet she carries on. One sister (who barely spoke to me last time), invited us to stay at her home and made time for me to give her Bible lessons. One sister endured a cut-off relationship with the person emotionally closest to her for righteousness' sake. One sister had gone back to the husband who beat her. One sister, whom I met now for the second time, gathered 5 friends to hear the gospel. Other sisters, who last time seemed disinterested in Bible study, attended lessons with shining eyes and afterwards sought further Biblical counsel. There are times we wonder if the churches will survive – but God IS working in the lives of these people and HE is powerful!

See all of these pics below:

- The kaleidoscope of sisters is also reflected in their dress: Zambian Traditional dress, Owambo traditional dress (Northern Namibia), Coloured traditional dress (Namibia and Cape, S.Africa).
- God is also a gracious God, who has given Les and I some beautiful moments together
- Interesting moments – like this one on top of the world's largest meteorite, Grootfontein, Namibia.
- Fun(?) moments – like in this campground.
- Awesomely beautiful moments – like this Zambezi River sunset on the border of Namibia and Zambia.
- Kindness of brethren moments – like when Gerry insisted that we use his cell phone to talk to our children on our 30th wedding anniversary.

And now, hopefully, some wonderful family moments with our daughter Melody and her husband who are due to arrive on Sunday for 12 days!

Thank you for your prayers. Without them we could not do this work. With love, Linda





