

Founder Journals

Zimbabwe Area

July 10th, 2007

I started my day out like any other, up at 4:00 am working in the home office. Melinda comes in at around 5, and I ask her why she is up so early! She says “Because I want to spend as much time with you as I can before you leave.” She does this often, and it makes me feel good to know I have such a loyal and godly wife that wants to spend time with a guy like me!

We get Maddie in the car, and we are off to the airport in Dulles at 7:00 am. I sit in the back with my little “Sugar Bean” as I call her so we can catch up as I explain to her where Daddy is headed. How do you tell a three year old girl that you're going away for almost a month in order to help change the lives of other three year old children that are not even your own? I know it must be a God thing because to leave my sweet family for people I don't even know does not make sense in my puny human mind. Anyway, I told Maddie I would bring her back a real live hippo, and she said “No Daddy, I want a pink teddy bear.” Thank the lord for simple things.

We pull up to the airport and Maddie wants a big hug and lots of kisses. As I reach over and hug her, she did what she has been doing a lot lately which is she hugs me tight and puts her face into my neck as to say “Daddy, this is where I feel loved and safe.” The tears were starting to trickle down my face as I pulled away from her little precious arms. As I write this I wonder how many little girls we'll see on this trip that will never know their daddies because of AIDS, disease, or starvation. God only knows, but I know if I don't look away it's all over. I look away and hug her. We kiss and say we will talk in the next day or two.

I am on Ethiopian Airlines and already see poverty and needs all around me. I already am feeling guilty with all that the Lord has placed in our care and the fact I just finished off a four-coursed meal. My emotions have been all over the place today: sad, elated, joyful, tense but most of all anticipation of what the Lord has in store for this trip and his people. We will see...

Ethiopia Africa

July 11th, 2007

Today was a day like none other. After flying halfway to Zimbabwe, which is a total of 50.8 hours including this stop over in Ethiopia, I sit in the airport for 3 hours waiting on papers so I could go to the hotel. On the way there, we went through the capital city, and it is by far the most impoverished city I have been in: literally hundreds of poor, starving and handicapped children and adults at every stoplight just waiting for someone to show mercy on them. I will never forget the on young blind boy who held my arm, and as we were pulling away I looked into his eyes and they were so empty, just like his stomach was. I wish I could say I gifted him but did not because I feared a massive mob once you start giving. I walked into the hotel ashamed and taken back by all the poverty, which causes deformity. I vowed to myself no matter what I was going to do the right thing in the morning.

I thought we would drive through this sad area like I have done so many times before but not this time; I am now spending the night right in the middle of it. Take any room you have rented that was run down and multiply it by two and that is where I am. No complaints, just the fact.

I talked to Melinda three times today. I miss them so much. I look forward to seeing what the next day will bring!

July 15th, 2007

Hello to all!

I just wanted to give you an update on the last several days and all the awesome things that have occurred in just a few days!! God is great and worthy to be praised! I think I will start with a few good stories and end with a capsulized version of what has happened so far as to the vision and mission.

We traveled to an important area on Friday called Matawanga. It took three and a half hours on dirt roads. Burt from ICM jokingly said he had always wanted to go to the end of the earth and convert the last person on earth so Christ would come! When there, we spoke to the Chief and Elder of the church there, which had been built in 1968. It was approximately

20'x40', he said that four days a week they worshiped with 200 people packed in this little building! We asked about food, water and other things. They earn on average \$1.00 per month and have only the food that they grown and in drought times it gets very difficult. I asked about when the well dried up where was their water source, and a lady said not far just over there she pointed. One of our people spoke to her in Shona, and they went back and forth; then he looked at me and said 1.5 milometers. For us city folk, that is only a mile's walk over and a mile's walk back carrying 10 gallon buckets on their heads. We are so pampered!

We then went to another village area where we were told they had a church of 150 people. This is the picture: above the poles, tin roof and tree trunk seats. One hundred and fifty come there to worship four times per week, and from this massive church building, they have sent out nine more church plants of which each of these has an average of 100 people. We went to the senior pastor's home where he had several of the other pastors there to meet with us. They are so full love and joy you would not believe. We sat in their living room with no lights for an hour showing a Power Point to them on church building, children's homes and church growth. As we were leaving we got hugged to death; it was awesome! We also took several pictures and printed them out for them right on the spot, and they were so amazed and thankful. Such a small thing for us but a big blessing for them; praise the Lord!

Going home I was expressing to Burt my concern about us being able to keep up with ICM and the overall cost of projects. He said he thought he could help so when we were talking about needing to drill water wells he picked up the phone to Franklin Graham (That is Billy's son if you didn't know) and told him of our vision, and he said wherever we go, they would go with us and drill the wells as long as they had funds! Apparently Dois, the founder of ICM, and Billy are very close friends. Lord how can you bless us anymore! Then a three-hour trek back to the hotel.

Saturday we met with the minister of local government, which is the second highest position in government reporting to the president. Wow, what a good-hearted guy he is. We talked for hours about how he wants to help his people, and how he wants to fly me up to the Mozambique boarder Monday to see a village that has been "left behind" in his words. You have to fly private plane, then by boat to get here, so I am not sure what we will see here, but I am sure it will be interesting. There was Christ in the midst of us for sure as I laid out a plan of

hope, care and love of Christ for his people, and the Lord showed us great favor with this man. He wanted us to then go with his personal assistant to see an orphanage that had burnt a month ago and the children were in terrible need. So we went...

We arrived around three and started looking at the site. This was a large whit farm house that was lost in their land reform, and they turned it into a home for children. There are 30 children here sleeping in two small rooms on mats. In another building, approximately 15 children sleep in each room. They have nothing, not even a Bible, yet their joy is so apparent. I had to go around the corner and weep due to what I saw. My prayer was "Oh Lord, forgive us for turning our backs on these children, and please help me forsake my posh life for the sake of these and all children you place in my path."

The next event changed my life forever. I went over and approached the children and you could see the joy and openness they carried. I asked each one of them to pose for a photo and give their name of which I have 15; the others were at school. As each one came to me, I kneeled and held them. At that very moment I felt like Jesus must have felt when he spoke to the little children. It was hard to describe but to say it was a feeling of the purist love and willingness to sacrifice for these little ones, and at that very moment, I knew this was were Jesus had been wanting to place me my whole life and life forward.

The next thing after pictures, they were back over by the fire cooking and I found myself down with them asking them small things. I noticed the little girl cooking and asked her what she was cooking. She replied but also started talking to me. She was a special little girl with a face of a true angel; her name was Sharoon, and I wanted to hold her and tell her everything was going to be alright, but I knew if I did I was going to loose it right there.

I switched over to Joseph who was about four and asked him if he knew about the story of Joseph in the Bible, and he said "Yes, I do!" I asked the others, and they all said they did which surprised me that these children with no Bibles, no electric, no TV would all know this story! The loudest voice over all of them now was Sharoon who said she knew the whole story. She is about twelve years old and has seen her father die first, then two years later, her mother. I asked the group "Do you know how to pray to Jesus?" They all said yes, and then Sharoon spoke to them in her language. The next thing I knew they all kneeled down beside

me and Sharoon lead them in prayer with hands held together.

As we were together I started weeping openly as I could not hold it back any longer. Sharoon finished and I said “Lord please protect these children from harm; please help us to know what your will is for each of these children, and how our hands can be your hands,” all while sobbing. Needless to say, I wanted to bring Sharoon home with me, and I very well may! We left there and I promised I would return to Katawa soon with Bibles.

We drove for two hours, and everyone was hungry, so we stopped at a local hangout. We had what they called Biltong, which is old hung-up meat spiced like jerky. For those of you who know me, I will and do eat anything, and it was quite good!

Sunday we went to a Pentecostal Africa church. It was awesome how they sing and praise! We had several meetings with people afterward and met with a wonderful lady who runs children's homes for over 6,000. We discussed our model and asked if it would fit, and she said it was an answered prayer. We met later with a national business leader who has planted 100 churches in Zimbabwe.

What We Know

- Between ICM and Change A Life there are 442 churches we can now start building all across Zimbabwe and approximately 80 children's homes
- We can do private adoption within these homes and the government will provide us Visas
- We will need approximately 8 acres of land for each project
- We are adding more livestock and gardening so homes can be more self-sustaining
- The need is beyond what was earlier thought
- The cost for each project less the well will be approximately 13,000—we are still fine tuning it
- The people of the nation are peaceful and full of joy
- Campus Crusade for Christ is very excited and does have the capacity to handle this with some outside financial support

- Our alliance partners and ourselves are clearly here all together with our steps ordered of the Lord!
- I really, really miss Melinda and my little sugar bean!

That is all for now, and as you can see, if this was all that happened we would call this a major blessing, but there is still the Jesus Film showing in several villages, Bible distribution to the children, visiting the schools, feeding the people approximately 10,000 meals, looking at more sites for the children's homes and more! I will try and write one more time before I return home.

July 20th, 2007

The last couple of days have been very fruitful for the Lord and have been very rewarding for me. We have passed out over 1,500 of the 5,000 Bibles to the children of Metabeland and now what stories and memories I have to share.

At one of the schools I handed a Bible to the head master of the school, and he was almost in tears. I asked him if he was a believer, and he said yes but just of three weeks and that he had no money to buy a Bible. He wrote his friend in Harare to see if they could help him get a Bible and he had been praying for one. This was an answered prayer. I said the Lord is good, and look, you prayed for one and he provided 58 more for your children!

The most sad but awesome testimony of God's powerful word was at the Jesus Film night when a young girl of maybe thirteen came up to me and said "Please sir, I would like to have a Bible so I can learn about this Jesus and because I didn't get one today at school." There were hundreds of people around, most of who would love to have Bibles but I knew I could not start handing them out there or we would have been mobbed. I said I was sorry, but I would try and get her one if time permitted. We must have been asked 50 times that night for Bibles, but we only had enough for the children. What struck me as the awesome part is here are teenagers hungry for the word and not video games, movies, MTV, or clothes but the awesome word of God!

Just in the 8 showings of the Jesus Film within the Metabeland province the group of young evangelists had 3,400 people to see the message of Jesus and 1,010 people came

forward and committed their lives to Christ! Wow, what a tool to share the message of Jesus Christ to the people.

There is no doubt that the word of God will reach thousands because of the Bibles these children now have in their hands which will now be transferred into their hearts. We will never hear of all the testimonies from this effort until we get to heaven one day.

Main Camp

July 21st, 2007

Today has been an awesome day! We woke up at 5:00 am with a message that during the night one of our team members had a major accident. They ran the truck off a cliff over an hour away and the truck was totaled for sure.

The awesome news was that the two men in the back were thrown from the truck onto rocks and the only injuries were a cut leg and a sore back. The natives told us that the last three wrecks there had been fatal and that there were also lions out in that area at night, which explains why no one came to the site until morning. Out here there are no phones, ambulances, doctors, or aid of any kind. If you get hurt badly, you die, so we thank you Lord for holding his hands down and catching these boys and keeping them from harm!

Because there are price controls on all commodities, there is no fuel in all of the country at any gas stations, so our truck today is to set out for supplies. We go into Hwange, which is a small town in Zimbabwe. We arrive and John with Life Ministries speaks in Shona to the guy. Long story short, it took two hours to get 20 gallons of diesel fuel.

Now we were looking for food, which is scare. We found a store selling bread and the lines were long. By the time we get up there, they ran out and said it would be another hour, so we wait. It hit me hard the Lord's Prayer when he says "Give us this day our daily bread." I now fully understand his prayer, because they were only giving one loaf per person and it was obvious all we were getting today was our "daily bread!" So we say thank you Jesus for our daily bread!

Lastly we went to find meat. I say meat, because steak is where you choose your cut, but here they just cut up the whole cow in long strips, and you get what you get! We went to ten butcher shops and no meat! Finally someone told us where to go. We got there and someone goes in and was told it would be 20 minutes. Funny story because as they tell me this I see a cow being skinned and brought in the back! Talk about fresh!

Now it is late and the sun is setting over Africa as we travel back to camp. We set up for a traditional Africa night, bonfire and all. As they cook the meat, we sing praise songs and they tell stories about their nights of the Film Project. One of the most interesting stories came from the guys that had the accident. They told of the chief in the village not wanting them to show the Jesus Film, and he got so angry that he called the police. The police came and said to the chief there was nothing they could do, and they could show it! The chief kept raving, and the police called him a devil, which is what he was, because he was a practicing witch doctor, and they said they were going to stay and watch it to make sure it was shown. Only one hundred showed up because of the fear they had for the “devil.” Thirty people came in and gave their souls to Jesus, and the devil lost out!

We prayed for one another and ate meat with our fingers, and I was sitting there under the stars. I felt at peace with these people as if we were one in Christ, bonded together for this one common cause, which was to propagate the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

July 22nd, 2007

We started out this morning at 7:30 am with eight people in a six-passenger van. It was cool out, and as we were driving out we saw zebras, monkeys, baboon and kudu. We traveled to Bulawayo and dropped off 4 people and continued on to Harare, which is a total of some 800 kilometers, which will take us some ten hours to travel. I am tired after trekking over these pot-holed roads. In a car with no suspension but the trip out was well worth it! I will close for now as the sun is setting, and it is getting dark in the car. We have had good conversations with Joshua who is documenting the trip with video recording. Nice young man with a lot of promise!

July 24th, 2007

I sit here on the terminal of of Lusaka, Zimbabwe Airport with continued engine problems. I contemplate getting off since the problems began in Zimbabwe today at 12:00 noon; it is now 10:00 pm., and we have flown basically 45 minutes! I pray that the Lord keep us safe and give the pilot in command common sense!

I sit here looking at Maddie and Melinda in pictures and yearn to be with them, but I know my trip will get pushed out another day.

To recap and look back at this trip, I have seen and experienced many things. What I have seen most is the resilience of God's people. The Lord did say he would not give us more than we could bear, and these people prove that! They have hope, joy and favor of the Lord in their lives.

The Bibles we gave out was an awesome testimony of the everlasting word! The children were so hungry to have Bibles, and I only feel badly that we could not have given more out—next trip! They are such a meek and peaceful people; I think that is why you want to help them so much. Just like our Heavenly Father would be to us if we were meek, humble and thankful to Him for what He has done and does for us!

I have also seen how myself, and probably every American, have grown so far from simplicity of Life. The people here want to fellowship and have relationships with others and with our God. I had a young man engage in conversation with me in the toilet! He just wanted to know about me, and of course as an American I would think, I was asking myself what does this fella want? He wants only to have a conversation with me like many others I had encountered.

I also found out how close of a relationship I have with Jesus and my wife. I really missed the time I had with Melinda each day and could only think of when we would be together again. Jesus was my source of strength and a constant friend in the absence of my best friend and partner, my wife!

The people are strong and live off the land. They walk sometimes six kilometers for

water everyday and dig wells in riverbeds. If we had to do this one time we would complain to high heaven.

Jesus please give us provisions so we may help these people all around the world. To serve them is a joy and to see these people come to the awesome knowledge of Jesus Christ is a priceless occasion. We look in seeing how God will direct our hands in his service next...

Blessings to All,

Don