



April 8, 2009

Hello to everyone from the shores of Lake Victoria,

Glenna and I extend our greetings and deepest thanks to you after concluding another week of teaching in a remote village. As we expected, the trip proved to be quite challenging and your prayers were greatly appreciated! As the apostle Paul wrote, we are to be "faithful in prayer," and just knowing that you were lifting us up before God gave us much encouragement.

On March 24<sup>th</sup>, the two of us, along with Pastors James and Frank, left Mwanza for the tiny village of Butundwe, which is located to the west of us. We began the day with a 30 minute ferry ride across a narrow portion of Lake Victoria before boarding a bus to continue the journey. The roads on that side of the lake are rough at best, and with the rainy season on, our coach made slow progress for much of the trip. After reaching the gold mining town of Geita, we switched vehicles and spent the final hour and a half on a winding back road. There have been reports of robbers working this area, but the Lord went with us and kept our team safe.

When we finally pulled into Butundwe, we received an extraordinary welcome from Pastor Joseph and his congregation. They surrounded the bus and greeted us with singing, dancing and praises to God for letting us come! We had been to Butundwe about two years before and the welcome then had been just as emotional.

This is one of the poorest villages we visit, with no electricity and no running water, yet they seem to be some of the happiest and most generous people. They led us in a parade to the Pastor's house where we were abundantly fed and entertained by several choirs.

The next morning, following breakfast, we went straight to the church to start the seminar. Glenna began a new series of lessons which covered the many aspects of maintaining a Christian marriage and family. She expounded on verses such as Ephesians 5:25, "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her." She explained to her class of mostly traditional Africans, that to follow this command requires putting your wife's needs ahead of your own, of loving and taking care of her as a husband would love and take care of his own body.

She also discussed the women's role using Ephesians 5:22, "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord." True submission, of course, requires trust and trust can only be present if the husband reflects the love of Christ. With marriage in Africa under as much assault today as in North America, Glenna was very encouraged at how well these teachings were received.

In one of my sessions we talked about the power and greatness of God. I read 1 Chronicles 29:11-12, where King David prays, "Yours, Oh Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty ... for everything in Heaven and earth is yours ... You are the ruler of all things." Moving from there, I covered the story of Elisha the prophet when he was threatened by the King of Syria, found in 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 6:8-23. The king sent armies to surround Elisha's house and when his servant saw them the next morning he was terrified, crying out to his master, "What shall we do?!" The prophet then answered him, "Don't be afraid. Those who are with us, are greater than those who are against us." Then God opened the servant's eyes and he saw what Elisha was referring to. Above and beyond the Syrian army stood the Lord's army equipped for battle with chariots and horses of fire! Obviously, the story is a lesson for all of us who face impossible circumstances of one kind or another. The power of God is ALWAYS greater than anything that can come against us!

On the second day of the program, we were all disappointed when Pastor James had to rush back to Mwanza because of an emergency. However, God continued to bless Frank, Glenna and I, not only in the seminar, but during our open air crusade which began Friday night. A huge crowd turned out each evening to get a look at the "wazungu" (white) missionaries and hear what they had to say. With every service an increasing number of people came forward to accept Jesus, as well as receive special prayer for everything from physical infirmities to deliverance from demon possession. At the end of each session the choirs took over and a joy, such as I've seldom witnessed before, swept through the crowd. In Africa when one person comes to Jesus, it's cause for celebration and the believers in Butundwe were not to be out done!

I can't begin to say enough good things about Pastor Joseph. Despite his difficult circumstances he is one of the kindest men I've ever met. He's done such an incredible job of setting a generous and humble example for each member of his congregation. Last year he received a sizeable donation from friends in Canada and was able to finish his church – that's another cause for celebration! May God continue to bless him and his family in a special way.

On a final note, we were all impressed when a young man in Pastor Joseph's church visited us late one evening while we were preparing to eat dinner. Meshach said he had been seeking God's direction in his life and asked if we had any insight we could give him. In the flickering lantern light, the three of us talked with him for several minutes relating many of our own experiences. In the end, Meshach seemed pleased, and like a young Nicodemus slipped back into the shadows with much on his mind.

In closing, our hearts and prayers go out to each of you! As mentioned earlier, your "faithful prayers" and generous support have been an inspiration to both Glenna and I. The Lord is truly a "God of second chances" and that not only applies to us in North America, but in Tanzania as well. May we all "press on" in the good work God has given us to do in these last days.

Love to all,

John Paul and Glenna