



Jensen Missions

Tanzania, East Africa

July 2009

SOME REALITIES WE USUALLY DON'T MENTION

During the month of July our family visited four different congregations: a congregation on the outskirts of Arusha, Babati, Monduli, and Kioga. George preached in each of these locations, delivering lessons designed to encourage and challenge. Each one of these congregations has its own set of strengths and weaknesses. However, there are some challenges common to just about every congregation in Africa, to a greater or lesser degree. Many of these are related to a long history of various cultural practices, many of which are contrary to biblical teaching.



One of the customs most often heard of is the practice of polygamy. There are many different tribes of people throughout Africa, and not all tribes practice polygamy. There may be some tribes that practiced it in the past, but now have, for the most part, abandoned the custom. However, the Massai tribe is one in which the practice is still very much alive.

Another practice which is still very prevalent in Africa is the practice of witchcraft. Generally speaking, the African population is very superstitious. Many villages have traditional healers, who offer special potions, incantations, etc. for this or that. To be clear, traditional healers are not individuals who simply practice homeopathy, but they are sorcerers who claim supernatural powers, with connections to the spirit world.

On our most recent visit to Kioga, the preacher was relating to George some of the struggles that the congregation has been facing. Some members, when faced with various trials or illnesses, have forsaken the church and have returned to traditional healers in hopes for a solution to their problems. As you can see, superstitious thinking is deeply entrenched in the minds of many Africans and unfortunately, these beliefs are often clung to even after conversion. It is very difficult to find out every peculiar belief. While we can teach on certain topics that we know are particularly troublesome, it is often the case that we only learn of a person's misunderstanding when a specific problem has arisen.

Related to the practice of witchcraft are the superstitious ideas regarding albinos. Albinos in East Africa live in constant fear for their lives due to witchcraft activities. It is alleged that albinos have supernatural power, which in turn threatens the local population, including the witch doctors. Those who subscribe to this belief think that if they can access certain body parts of an albino, the power can be transferred to them. Tragically, the last two years has seen a significant increase of horrible murder and mutilation incidents.

Even Africans who are not albino, but have lighter skin, are afraid, and not without just cause. Our own brother in Christ, Innocent, who is a graduate of ACSOP and preacher for the Monduli congregation, just received the tragic news of his brother's murder, right here in Arusha. Innocent's brother was certainly not an albino, but he did have lighter skin than some. The details of his murder suggest that it is quite possibly related to witchcraft. Innocent and his family need many prayers as they mourn the violent death of a family member who was not a Christian.

It is mind-boggling to know how base human beings can become, when God is not present in their lives, or ideas about God are grossly distorted from truth. Evangelism in Africa must include so much more than the plan of salvation. These are just some of the issues we must be ready to deal with when we teach the gospel in Africa.

Volunteer Work



Lindsey recently began volunteer work, usually once or twice a week, at the medical clinic which is owned and operated by Dr. Danny and Nancy Smelser, members of the church. The clinic is about an hour away from our house. Lindsey loves going there to help, and she is learning much in the process. Here is a peek into one of her days:

Sunday night I spent the night with the Staffords so I could get up and go to the clinic with Stephanie on Monday. Pretty much all day long Monday I was back in the pharmacy, moving medicine to a new shelf, labeling them, and stuff like that. Lindsey Gee came that day and helped out too. In the pharmacy, they have some small jars of peanut butter to give out for malnourished patients, and they were on the very top shelf.

Lindsey and I had to move it to its new shelf, so she was on one chair, and I had another one. I would stand on the chair, grab some peanut butter, hop down, run and hand them to Lindsey, then run back to my chair again. Thankfully Tizo (Tizo is a young guy who works at the clinic who's almost like the Smelser's adopted son) happened to come in, and stood on the chair, threw the peanut butter across the room for me to catch, then I would hand it to Lindsey to put on the top shelf. It went alot faster once we did it that way! Monday was a really busy and interesting day, and I even got to look at a stool sample with hookworms, and a blood sample infected with malaria under the microscope!

Monday afternoon, Stephanie decided that since Tuesdays at the clinic have been really busy lately, that she would go the next day. Since I was already staying with Stephanie, I just stayed another night, then went with her on Tuesday. I started out in the pharmacy, moving medicine so there would be more room in between them. They were really crowded together, and we didn't want to accidentally grab the wrong one! After I did that, I transferred diagnoses into the log book (that's one of my regular jobs now). When I was done transferring diagnoses, Tizo asked me to help him in the card room. We cut the patient file folders so they'd be the right size, then we filed them into a cardboard box (A box that I won't mention took us a while to figure out how to put together right!). Then I helped Nancy work in the pharmacy...getting people's medicine, figuring up what they owe, writing down medicines, and a bunch of good stuff like that. Also, sometimes I try to translate the directions on how to take medicine, and whatever else needs to be said. I think I need to memorize more medical vocabulary! Sputum? Pus?! I have no idea what that is in Swahili! So lots of times we need a real translator instead. :)

Sometimes we'll see some really sad things at the clinic. Like today there was a young Massai man who came in, who had TB of the spine. He looked incredibly young...we all thought he was maybe around 14, but it turned out he was 22. He'll most likely die before too long, because he needs extremely aggressive treatment, which he very most likely won't receive. It's very sad. But working there is so enjoyable, especially when you have a wonderful old woman thank you over and over, and be so grateful, when all you did is tell her how many times a day to take her Erythromycin!

-Next week Stephanie's going to let me take patient histories!

-Linz

George and Jacob are spending the month of August in Malawi, helping Ed and Lina Crookshank. Many of you may remember that our family spent a month with Ed and Lina in 2006. They've had a great need for teachers to come and help in their Mobile Bible School program, and George and Jacob have gone to assist them. They will be teaching 5 days a week, teaching and preaching on Sundays, and Jacob will also be teaching in a couple of youth seminars. Please keep them in your prayers, as well as the rest of us, who are keeping the home fires burning. ☺

Contributions May Be Sent To:
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