

May 3, 2010

Dear friends,

It has been a crazy few weeks and I've been struggling to find time to get this letter to you.

The last I wrote, I was on my way to India. We had a great time there teaching one of our courses to the leaders of India Bible Literature. We continue to be encouraged by the possibilities that are there. But we are learning that there are many things we have to sort out. But we are rapidly gaining more information and meeting people who are truly experts on India who seem to be very willing to help us.

The ash cloud from the volcano in Iceland was making travel difficult while we were there. It didn't affect my flights as I went through Asia rather than Europe. However, my colleagues with me both had to make alternative arrangements to get home. One of them spent an extra three days in India before he managed to get back. Funny how something happening in Iceland can impact you all the way in India.

When I got home to Colorado Springs, I had a week to unpack, debrief, do all the household chores, pay the bills, and then get ready for the next trip. I was hoping for some time to catch my breath and even work on some of my talks for my Africa trip, but it wasn't to be. Before I knew it, I was flying to Johannesburg, South Africa...this would have been last Thursday.

In South Africa, the Entrust president (David) and I met with the African leaders of our ministry. They took us to one of the townships north of Johannesburg called Daveyton. South Africa looks like America in most ways, but the townships are where many of the black Africans still live in South Africa. The homes are small and the area is not well developed. Our first course in Africa is one about ministering to people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS since places like this have been hard hit. It seems that nearly every family have had multiple deaths from AIDS. We met some of the people who have been taught to help their communities and their families. I was given a beaded tie by one of the members of one group that makes handcrafts to sell to support their families and others affected by the AIDS crisis. It was quite stirring to hear one lady who is the principle of a school. She herself had lost a sister and brother to AIDS. But everyday she has to help the children in her school who have lost parents or who are now the primary caregiver for their parents/parent while also attending school. In the evenings she teaches our course on AIDS to other church members.

The course helps them think through how AIDS affects them and their neighborhoods and church and then requires them to do a project in their community. This has been a real breakthrough for the churches because the churches normally either try to deny the impact of AIDS or stigmatizes it so that those who have it don't even reveal it to fellow church members. Families suffer in silence. But now they are recognizing their need for compassion and their responsibility to help the suffering. People are now understanding that the church is not a place of judgment but of grace and help.

I am currently now in Mozambique, having driven from South Africa by car yesterday and today. Unfortunately, David fell in the shower, shattered the glass door into a million pieces and cut up his back. He had to have two stitches once we got to Mozambique. I'm beginning to think that everyone who goes with me gets injured---you remember that my dad got gored by a bull on my last trip to Cameroon and had to have a couple of stitches. Oh well. Do pray for David that the wounds would heal and that there would be no infection.

I'll get back to you in a few days and give you some more details about this trip. We will be at a missionary guest house where I can get email...haven't been able to get online for the last several days.

OK, got to run. My battery is about to go out.

Always, Alan