

The Stage was Set

The five and a half hour border crossing into Zimbabwe set the stage for the rest of our Mission trip. It was clear from the word go, that things were going to be tough and people would be sent to test our patience. Even though we were going to minister to others, God was teaching and growing me during the course of our Mission.

A Family of Believers

When you minister to a foreign church, the congregation can, at times, feel distant. There isn't always a strong connection with the people, as there may be at your home fellowship. This however, was not the case in many of the churches in Zimbabwe. Over time we have built up such a good relationship with the local people in Zimbabwe that stepping behind the pulpit feels more comfortable than it would at home. We had many opportunities to preach to congregations and we were always warmly received.

"Fulfil my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. " Philippians 2:2

Rural Ministry

Within the rural areas there are a lot of people who do not yet possess a Bible, even though they have been church-goers for years. Pastors struggle with cults and ancestor worship all over Zimbabwe but it is especially prevalent in the rural areas. It is almost as though speaking out against such things is taboo, especially when there are pastors who participate in ancestor worship themselves. A large part of this problem is that the Gospel is not understood by most of the evangelists or the so-called *"spiritual leaders"* of Zimbabwe. People are so interested in filling their churches with numbers, that they tell people whatever they want to hear to get them in the front door. Most Evangelism consists of entertaining people under the guise of Christianity where people are lead to pray a prayer so that they can feel good about themselves. While we were ministering in one rural area, we were teaching on Biblical Evangelism. We taught that the Holiness of God and the wrath of God against Law breakers must be preached before the grace

and mercy of the sacrifice of Jesus can be proclaimed. This caused one pastor to get worked up and tell us that we just need to focus on getting the person to make a token commitment and worry about all the other stuff later on. This seems to be the method of modern Evangelism across Zimbabwe.

Helping the Hungry

While we were in the rural areas it became apparent that knowledge of the Scriptures is lacking. This caused us to speak on very basic, yet important topics. We spoke on what the Bible says about sin, the fall of man, the need for a Messiah and what it really means to be Saved, as well as how to share your Faith. While we were speaking on these topics there were many questions, and many people seemed to have a better understanding about their Salvation at the end. The evidence of hunger for the Word of God was overwhelming, as they kept us for extended periods of time, trying to learn as much from us as they could. The questions ranged from Salvation, to true and false prophets, to how often we should take communion. Many people neglect the rural areas and focus heavily on city ministry. A problem that people in rural areas face, across Africa, is that their young aspiring pastors go off to the city to become educated in the Word of God, yet neglect to ever go back to the rural areas where they are needed the most.

True and False Prophets

As many people know, there are a lot of false preachers and teachers out in Zimbabwe who teach and do a lot of funny things. They make their followers pay them a lot of money so that they can continue to receive prophecy, healing, or just hang out with the "*prophet*". This has caused my heart to grieve as I have spent so much time with my brothers and sisters in Zimbabwe. One woman had a son who was terribly sick and was in so much pain that he could not go to the bathroom and cried the entire time I was witnessing to her. She told me that she has money to take her son to the hospital but she would rather spend it on getting him to the

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apostles

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One pastor who we work with, told us about some of the other things that go on and asked us if we can come and preach to his church on this topic. Two of us went to his church and preached to the congregation for two hours on the purpose of the Holy Spirit and the purpose of the gifts of the Spirit. He was very grateful and we pray that some of his members have been set free from any false teachings they have come under.

Seminary Experiences

We were invited to preach and teach at a few Bible Seminaries in Zimbabwe. At first, I was slightly reluctant to preach at a Seminary, as I thought we may be wasting our time. The rural areas of Zimbabwe are the places that need most of our attention and I had my doubts about the need for us to preach to seminary students. My doubts about the ministry at the seminaries were soon gone as we observed the lack of Biblical understanding that the students displayed, as well as many of the bad attitudes that we came across. There was also the fact that many of them failed the 128 multiple-choice question Bible Exam, which, 16-year-old girls have passed with full marks at our courses before. Obviously these future pastors of Zimbabwe need good Biblical teaching and training.

Soteriology

Soteriology is the doctrine of Salvation. Many times people will want to move on from Salvation and get into the *"deeper things of God"*. This portrays a shallow understanding of the Gospel and what Jesus accomplished on the Cross. There may be no topic, or doctrine that is more important than Salvation. A preacher, or evangelist can preach for years and years about the Gospel and still be taken back and blown away by its magnificence. A good preacher once said:

"any preacher that is going to preach on the Cross of Christ must come to terms with the fact that he will do the Cross no justice"

While we were lecturing to the seminary students, we laid a huge emphasis on Salvation and Repentance and it seemed as though many of them didn't have a good understanding of the Gospel as we continued in our discussions with them.

Dangers of a False Gospel

When a false, man-centred gospel is preached, it can create false, or man-centred converts. One person at a seminary asked if a pastor should be rich and have nice material things so that the community can look up to him. This view on church leadership is the product of a man-centred gospel. Thankfully we were able to deal with these issues and some of them showed a great appreciation for these presentations on the Gospel and Evangelism. One of the

students reported back to us and said: *"I have learned how to evangelise... I have learned that you have to deny yourself and follow Jesus."*

Responses from Students

At first many of the students were not happy with what we were telling them. There were even students who were becoming quite aggressive towards us and what we were teaching. This was part of the struggle that we faced throughout the Mission. As poor as some of the attitudes toward us were, by the end, the students were very grateful for what we had taught them. Some of the responses were: *"I learned that Jesus is the Way to Life and that we must not be thirsty after money but after God's Word"; "I learned that Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life and that we must go and spread the Gospel to those who do not believe in Him. "; "Learning about Evangelism was very good and the teaching about false prophets was even better."*

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Our hearts are deceitful and no one can know it except for God... I also pray that one day in life I will be the salt of the earth and a light on top of a mountain... Please come again.

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I have realised that there are preachers who claim to get their messages from the Bible but do not.

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Many said that they learned more about Evangelism, what it means to deny yourself and what it means to be a disciple. Surprisingly we didn't receive any negative responses at the end of the seminar. One of the students displayed much enthusiasm and told us that he had greatly benefited from the lectures. He said that this is something that Zimbabwe needs and that we must come to his home church.

Evangelism Training

After much Evangelistic training, we took the students out onto the streets to get some hands-on experience. Some of them said that they had never gone Evangelising before and I

took one of the inexperienced ones with me. After observing his "sales pitch" technique, I encouraged him to be himself and try to get into a conversation with the person. After we had gone out he said that he had learned so much just by observing and practicing what he learned. The next day I took another student with me and he used the man-centred approach to the Gospel that we had just spent two days speaking against. This is why it is good to go out with the students and teach them in a practical situation.

"For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. " Romans 1:16

Film Evangelism

There are many great Evangelistic films that can be used to draw crowds in order that the Gospel can be preached to them. We used the "God Story" and "Truth" DVDs for our outreaches. After we had shown the films and people were all gathered together, we had good opportunity to preach to the people. While there are those who came forward to give their lives to the Lord, I cannot say that I have full confidence in their sincerity. It is common for people (even pastors) to come forward in an Evangelistic appeal just to be polite. There are also those who step forward because they are caught up in the hype of the atmosphere. I am concerned that Film Evangelism can sometimes be nothing more than religious entertainment. While it does have its uses and the Gospel is preached, I do not believe that Film Evangelism should replace one-on-one personal Evangelism and there needs to be a good follow up after a Film outreach.

One-on-One Evangelism

Zimbabwe is such a rich ground for Evangelism but hardly anyone is doing it. Our team was discussing this and came to a conclusion that planting a church would be easy in Zimbabwe. If one were to go onto the streets every day for a week, or two, you would easily gather enough people to start a church. Doing personal Evangelism is one of the highlights of any Mission. This is where you really see the conviction of the Holy Spirit come upon people and the change in their whole appearance after they surrender their lives to Christ. I had a great time speaking to people about the Gospel and many of them were very grateful afterwards.

Aggression

Some of our Evangelistic encounters were not altogether pleasant. We met some aggressive people in one of our rural outreaches. One market place that we visited had 9 shabeens in a street, not longer than 50 meters. By 2:30pm there were drunken people everywhere and some of them showed us a great amount of aggression in hopes to show off to their friends. One man was shouting at me and banging on my chest and another was screaming at me and followed me while continuing to scream for a short distance. Clearly alcohol is a plague in that community and the men are effected the most. Even though there were aggressive individuals we could still find those who were not completely drunk and we could share the Gospel with them. In another instance I found a Muslim woman sitting in her back yard and spoke to her about her religion. When I confronted her about the idolatrous nature of Islam, she became very angry and started shouting at me and about me. Even after I left her house she was still raving about me and what a liar I am.

Ministering to the Elderly

The pensioners of Zimbabwe struggle greatly. One of our goals is to bring the pensioners some relief aid in the form of food, candles, literature and more. The pensioners are always so grateful for what they receive and in some cases it is all they ever receive. Not only do we minister to their bodies but we also have opportunities to preach to them, sing hymns with them and just chat to them. Ministering to the elderly is one of the greatest highlights of our Mission.

Please Pray for Zimbabwe

One of the Pastors in Zimbabwe told us that all he hopes for is that God will revive Zimbabwe. There are many pastors who feel defeated because of the immense amount of ancestor worship in the churches. There is also a lot of drunkenness in the rural areas which can make things seem even worse. One encouragement that pastors have, is that Zimbabwe is desperate for revival and that is exactly the state of a country in which God has moved in the past.

Answers to Prayer

Our time was well spent in Zimbabwe and God really opened up some good doors of ministry to us. There were also many great Evangelism opportunities and people seem hungry to hear the truth. We spent time ministering to young men who were fired up for God and had a good understanding of the Word of God. These men will be future pastors in Zimbabwe and we are encouraged by them. There are pastors who are earnestly praying for Zimbabwe and are encouraged that God will intervene and change the heart of the nation.

"For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth. " 3

John 1:3-4

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