

The Murray Family

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"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."
2 Timothy 2:2

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We are in the middle of the end of the rainy season. Before the dry season overtakes us, I wanted to share a few reflections on the rains and their impact on life here in Zambia. For more than half the year, it doesn't rain at all. The landscape is brown and barren. As water levels drop, the water supply becomes less dependable. The temperatures climb closer to 100 degrees. The first rains are met with celebration! Everyone prepares their yards and fields for planting. Any unused space becomes a garden plot. And then the rains - heavy rains - come. Most of the food supply for the entire year is grown during the few months of rain. The water supply stabilizes. Umbrellas pop up everywhere. As the days go by, Zambia begins to turn green.

There is however, a downside to the rains. In a pedestrian culture, a day of rain brings a slowdown to much of the city. No one wants to walk in the rain! Cooking over a charcoal fire becomes more difficult. Wash on the line remains wet, often for days at a time. Vendors in the market cover their wares and head for shelter. Many roads become impassable (for pedestrians or vehicles). Poor drainage causes the water to cut gullies across the roads. In low places, the water piles up deeper than the car tires. Other places become bogged down with deep mud. Meetings are postponed. Events are cancelled. If it rains on Sunday morning, our attendance at church is cut by more than half.



Every year flooding washes away portions of the roads, often isolating rural villages. Where the roads remain, they are often covered by water (we have learned the hard way that it is best to drive through the middle of puddles - the edges are softer and it is easy to get bogged down in the mud). The low-lying areas of Lusaka have standing water around and even in the buildings. In some places, the water is not the result of flooding, but is due to the water table having risen so high. Poor sanitation adds to the problem as garbage and refuse floats in the dirty water. These conditions have led to outbreaks of cholera, a disease that causes severe diarrhea, leading to dehydration and death within a few days. As I write this, neighboring Zimbabwe is facing a huge cholera crisis.



For the most part, the rains are simply an inconvenience to us. We live in a more modern suburb where we are shielded from the most severe impacts of the rains. But the people with whom we minister are not so fortunate. It is heartbreaking to live in the midst of such suffering. But this is not a call to social action. While we help where we can, there is little that can be done to alleviate the systemic conditions that lead to such severe problems. Yet it brings an urgency to our message and our ministry. The fields are indeed white unto the harvest. But they are often flooded. A harvest delayed may not be available tomorrow. Pray for the people of Zambia. Pray for us as we seek to share the only real hope there is - the gospel of Jesus Christ!

UPCOMING FURLOUGH

Our plans for furlough are shaping up.

We will be in PA in April, in IN in May, in Minneapolis at the end of June and back in PA at the beginning of July.

We still need:

- housing in IN - we are waiting to hear from a couple of folks on this
- use of a bigger car (full-size van), especially for traveling between states
- more opportunities to present our ministry to churches and other groups

If you can help with any of these, please email us right away.

PRAISE and PRAYER

Praise the Lord for the 12 people that received Jesus as their Savior in the last two months.

We have been intentional in developing relationships in the community and in presenting the gospel to the lost.

Although we don't always see the results of our ministry, it is encouraging to see people respond.

Pray for these new believers as we seek to disciple them and help them to grow.

There is much misinformation about Christianity in this culture (did an alien really bring Revelation from the moon?)

There are also many obstacles to learning to walk by the Spirit.

We believe that much of the future of our ministry will come from these disciples as grow in grace.

Praise the Lord for the students who have committed to participate in the current course on the first five books of the Bible.

Several students have attended each course that I have offered - we are focusing on other ways we can help them grow.

At the same time, there are many new faces who are eager to take advantage of this opportunity.

Pray for these students, that they would make attendance a priority - commitment is something that is missing here.

My hope is that they would not be content to know about the Bible but would learn to apply the Word to their own lives.

Praise the Lord for the many ministry opportunities that our family has - they truly are missionaries!

Tracy, Abram, Aaron and Rebekah are all involved in different facets of ministry.

And Corrie and Caleb continue to be ministry magnets - drawing people to us and our work.

Pray that each person may see their work as unto the Lord and not just something they do because Dad is a missionary.

Having a team composed of family members poses unique challenges as we work with our personalities and preferences.

We also find that much of the enemy's opposition is played out in family relationships.

Praise the Lord for the many prayer partners and financial supporters that uphold and undergird our ministry.

Their generosity continues to bless us and impact the lives of those we work with.

We are always mindful and grateful for their commitment to missions.

Pray for more opportunities to share our excitement about what God is doing in Zambia.

We find that when people see the need, they respond - despite the difficulties of the days in which we live.

We are especially looking for help in presenting our work to additional Baptist and Bible Churches.

Praise the Lord for the generosity of folks as we make our plans for our time in the States.

Although we are trusting God to work out the details, it is always fun to see just how He will do it.

Pray that He will work through the things that still need to be sorted out in the way that brings Him the most glory!

Next to the initial start-up costs, furlough is probably the most expensive aspect of mission work

Our hope is that we spend less than our current support, so that furlough creates a balance and not a deficit.

In His service,

Mark, for the Murrays