



FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

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FAMILY TIME

Dear fellow travelers,

Three South Africans were traveling with three Zimbabweans to watch a soccer match that required some hours of travel by train. The three South Africans went to the ticket window and each purchased a train ticket. Only one of the Zimbabweans went to the ticket window and bought a single ticket. The South Africans enquired of the others, "What are you going to do?" The answer was, "Watch and learn." All six got on the train and started the journey. When the conductor came to their railway car and announced, "Tickets please," the three Zimbabweans ran to the back of the train and all crammed themselves into the toilet compartment. As the conductor reached the back of the car, he knocked on the toilet door and asked for a ticket. The door opened a crack and a ticket was handed through. The conductor went on his way. After the soccer match, the three South Africans thought this was a good plan and only bought one ticket. None of the Zimbabweans bought a train ticket. Again the Zimbabweans told the South Africans to "watch and learn." When the conductor entered their car, the three South Africans jumped up and ran to the toilet. One of the Zimbabweans followed them and knocked on the toilet door and said, "Ticket please." Zimbabweans have developed shrewdness and innovation in order to survive these difficult times.

The past two weeks have been a whirlwind of activity. Last week was a church-wide Leader's Retreat held at EBI and attended by approximately 65 persons. Normally, accommodation is not a huge problem since some of the secondary school students would have completed exams and gone home for the year. This year exams were late and accommodation was a major challenge. But everyone did end up with a roof over their heads even if they did not have a mattress under their back. The cooperation and sincere desire to assist from the other units on the mission were greatly appreciated. The workshop closed on Friday, and Saturday was scheduled to be Alumni Homecoming. The event was very poorly planned and attended; maybe next year will be better. Sunday saw the graduation of nine students. Dr. Victor Nakah, president of the Theological College of Zimbabwe in Bulawayo, was the guest speaker, and he presented an excellent challenge to the graduates. Bishop Danisa Ndlovu gave a sobering yet accurate charge to the graduates that reflected the difficulties of church service in Zimbabwe and urged them to remain faithful in spite of the challenges. Now they are out in the "real world," on their own, and must figure out if, how, and where they can serve the church. The parable of the sower will definitely apply.

Thanksgiving: Thursday was just another day for us. However, as Chris and I were collapsing into our bed for the night, we still observed the tradition of identifying what we were thankful for. The response that immediately came to mind was our two incredible daughters that we haven't seen in eleven months. The second (and more practical) response was to be thankful for the still-running fan and electricity; they make sleeping more pleasant and refreshing. Life is much simpler here.

Black Friday: Again, just another workday. I have just read a book entitled *Saving Zimbabwe: Life, Death, & Hope in Africa*. Bob Scott was an American pastor involved with a bold, biblical attempt to promote racial harmony and development in Zimbabwe by assisting a diverse group of believers that established a "Community of Reconciliation" on a farm at the edge of the Matopo Hills. Black Friday, November 1987 saw the massacre of the 16 white members of the community. We were living only ten miles away at Matopo Mission at the time. It is a thought-provoking book that reveals with simplicity and personality the lives, beliefs, and dreams of those who gave their lives that night. The book also describes, somewhat simplistically but accurately, the deterioration of Zimbabwe since that time. I am reminded of a remark attributed to the Roman philosopher Seneca. When Seneca was informed of the death of a group of legionnaires his response was, "They were not defeated; only killed." The

words of Jim Elliott also come to mind: “No fool is he who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.” Individual casualties may occur. Lives may be surrendered. But victory is guaranteed. The battle goes on.

Once the official activities were completed, I could then return to the more mundane tasks that needed to be accomplished prior to being away for a month. It was necessary to try to arrange for the payment of December salaries for EBI employees. (This is no small task in a cash-strapped economy.) There was an opportunity to purchase some government subsidized fertilizer at 25% of the normal price; valuable time and transportation was required but the mission was accomplished. Now we just pray that the rains continue and our efforts to make EBI more self-sustainable are successful. My pig project is very rewarding. We now should have four young, pregnant females awaiting their first litters; ten weaned piglets; and an adult female now in a co-ed pen. The vegetables in the garden are doing magnificently. Of course, the timing is such that we will have to find someone to use them until school opens in January. The rural churches greatly blessed EBI with their donations of maize. Another just-completed project was the construction of a concrete granary to store and treat the maize for use during 2010. We should be able to harvest some for ourselves independently of the rainy season since we have access to water. We shall see. Finally, the last activity before heading to South Africa was to show someone else how to activate the water pump. Unfortunately, lightning had burned out the starter switch and that had to be repaired before taking off. The other unplanned activity was losing six hours helping with a coffin and transportation for a funeral. People have very few options and are sincerely grateful for assistance. It’s just the way it is. All we can try to do is keep our priorities right and respond as Jesus would. It’s a huge assignment.

I hope that this message does not seem too disjointed. It’s been an insane month. As always we remain enormously aware of our dependence on your support in so many ways. The Ndebele have a saying that roughly translates as “Don’t be tired of doing good. Not even tomorrow.”

Make it count,
Steve and Chris

We serve under the auspices of Brethren in Christ World Missions. Contributions towards our ministry may be sent to Brethren in Christ World Missions, PO Box 390, Grantham PA 17027-0390 or in Canada, 2700 Bristol Circle, Oakville, ON L6H 6E1.