

Trip to Africa

February, 2007

Paul and Micky Prince

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We arrived in Johannesburg with no problem. Was met by our hosts and we were on our way to Vaalwater. About a 3-hour drive. We stopped along the way for dinner. Arrived there in the dark and they dropped us off at one of the extra houses on their property. They shined a flashlight in the general direction of their house and said there was a path there and to follow it in the morning to their house. Was awakened numerous times by different animal noises, mostly birds. Found the path the next day and found their house. Had breakfast and went to church. Met a lot of nice people. On Monday we mostly just rested and hung around their house. No one was available to show us what they did, they were all out of town stocking up on supplies.

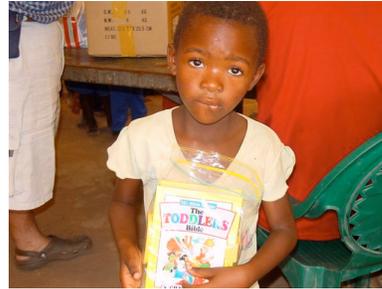
Tuesday we went to Leseding with Marilyn, Terri and Hamish. This is the name of the township where all the very poor people have put up shacks. It is estimated it has a population of 25,000-50,000 people. Terri and Hamish have a ministry there. They identify the poorest ones and the orphans. They pass out food parcels and check on ill people. One lady thought that her neighbor had poisoned her daughter because they are jealous of the help she is receiving. Terri and Hamish have provided tin shacks and a toilet to a few families, who had really bad living conditions. He's a tour guide at one of the game reserves and takes people on safari. When they are sitting around the fire at night, they ask him what he does in his spare time. He tells them about the poor people and they immediately want to help. So they get a lot of their ministry



money from his job. When we got home that evening we made peanut butter and Jelly sandwiches out of 24 loaves of bread. A few other households were doing the same thing that night.

So on Wednesday, we took all our PB&J sandwiches back to Leseding where the weekly Wednesday feeding is held. They feed PB&J to all the small children, mothers with infants, and pregnant women at 9am. They also get a cup of milk straight from the cow that morning. It comes in huge buckets, donated by a local dairy. At 2pm they feed the school children the same thing. There were at least 200 people in the morning. We were told a lot of the time, the mother's will take the kids milk and maybe even the sandwich and take it home to be split with the rest of the family. If they try to stop that, the kid won't come at all, so they just ignore it. The African helpers that assist them (for free) are not particularly nice to the kids. These kids don't get love and care from anyone. Then they go home and kick the dog, because that's all they know. So the people from the church try and love on them as much as possible. They have a bible story before they get their food and they sing songs and pray. On this particular day, there are bible storybooks to be passed out to every child. Terri and Hamish have been raising funds for this. So we wash the

children's hands and put their book in a plastic bag after writing their names in the books and tell them how special the book is. We see children all over the township for the next few



days reading those books. Evidently the word got out we were giving books out. So the 2pm feeding was swamped. We probably had about 400-500 kids. We didn't run out of books, but halfway

through we started giving out half glasses of milk and half a sandwich and still ran out of that before we ran out of books. There was a total of 712 bibles given out, so we were told.

On Thursday we went with Tiens to feed the people living at the dump. They scavenge food and recycle items like glass, tin and plastic. There is no transportation, so white people take advantage of them. They pick up the sacks of recycles, take it to the recycle place and then give the poor people only a few pennies on the dollar of what they received for the stuff. Tiens has gotten on to them about that and told them it wasn't right. Cars are ridiculously expensive and so is gas. Most people walk everywhere. On this day Tiens had a truck bed full of sacks of corn meal, which is the staple food here. So each family got one bag. He's identified about 120 families living there. He brings whatever he can come up with, sometimes it's only a loaf of bread each. He has to run in and run back out before he draws a crowd. If he stays too long, other people from outside the area will start showing up. The dump people recognize his truck and come running immediately and have learned to line up in an orderly fashion. It used to be a mess trying to pass things out. He also has to move fast, because when the trash trucks show up, he loses their attention. He tries to give a real quick message and prayer before passing out the food. He is trying to get a plot assigned to himself, so he can put a permanent structure on it, and feed the people the same way the Wednesday feeding is done on the other side of the township. After we were done there, we finally got to use a really small (3 computers) internet cafe in town, to send out an e-mail.

On Friday we stayed around the house again waiting for some missionaries from Mozambique to arrive. They are old friends of our hosts, Stu and Marilyn, and we had met them also at a missionary convention the year before. With missionaries, it is a very small world. Jacob and Jaynie showed up late, but we had a nice dinner and a long conversation.

On Saturday we went out to one of the largest farms in the area, owned by a very nice man. He's almost 80 and it was his wife's 80th birthday. So we kind of crashed the birthday party and then went to one of his tobacco barns. Stu has stored a huge office building's furnishings in it. It was given for free. So we dug around in there for quite awhile looking for a few small pieces that could fit in Jacob's truck, for them to take back with them. We had a revival meeting that evening back in Leseding. It was well attended and the preacher was a young man in the church who was just getting into the preaching business. He wants to have these meetings

on a monthly basis. The older preachers were discussing afterward how they could help him prepare his messages.

On Sunday Paul preached at the church. It is a church attended by mostly farmers and game reserve owners, who also bring in their safari guests to church. So it is always an international audience and new people all the time. It's out in the middle of no where and the only English speaking church within 100 miles. We had a good lunch, more talk and then Jacob and Jaynie headed out. We spent the evening packing up the suitcases.



On Monday we went back out to Leseding to help pass out food and check on people. We went to one house that 11 people live in and a 16-year-old is head of household. As we were driving through the area, Terri stopped because she saw a child limping and wanted to check on him. She used to be a nurse. Medical attention is bad for these people. The free clinic is a joke, you get an aspirin for a broken arm, type of care. If you get decent care some where else, the witch doctor in your neighborhood will give them something else and tell them not to take the white man's medicine. So they end up even sicker. Another house we went to had not had water in 2-3 weeks and the chicken project that they had been given was not looking good. We took their big jugs and drove all over trying to find someone who still had a working faucet in their yard. Finally found an elderly lady, who agreed to let us have water when we told her what it was for. Terri gave her some food in exchange. One of the men that works for Stu had a bad experience over the weekend. He was out of town at a wedding and when he came back, some people had stolen his shack and furniture. The neighbors said it was a group of men, one had a gun. They just took the shack apart, loaded the furniture and took off. Not exactly a problem we would even think of having here, maybe your stuff stolen, but not your house. After lunch, we headed out of town to our meeting place, to be handed off to our next couple that we were visiting in Rustenburg. We went from wildlife keeping us awake to traffic keeping us awake. We stayed at a couple's house that was out of town. Their parents were also in the house with us. They have a fairly large group of missionaries in Rustenburg, and they all share vehicles and houses, as they are needed, especially when someone is out of town.

On Tuesday we went to the Lighthouse children's shelter for toddlers and infants. These are orphans or abused kids. A lot of them will be adopted out of the country eventually. I was happy to see that the helpers were very nice to the children. I mentioned that to one of the workers and she said if you are caught slapping a child, you will be immediately fired. The workers know which kids have aids, so they take a little extra precaution, but they don't make a point of telling visitors which ones have it, so they don't make it obvious of avoiding a child. We stayed for a few hours and played with and fed the kids. We sorted out the supplies we brought with us and the school supplies we brought came in real handy. We had a suitcase of stuff for each location we visited.

On Wednesday we went to Phokeng and visited the Catholic hospice for aid patients. We talked with a few of them and prayed with them. The hospice tries to be self-sufficient as possible. They use solar heat, have a vegetable garden and chickens. It is very peaceful and nice there. The lighthouse shelter gets their aids drugs for the children from the hospice. In another part of town is a lady called Martha. With the help of Derek and Rebecca (the other couple we visited with) she feeds 40-50 orphans lunch every day after school. We helped with the cooking, passed out food, played with them and sang songs. Derek is raising money now to build a car port type of structure, so the children will have some shade to eat under and a place to work on homework.

On Thursday we went to 3 different schools and picked up 5 of the orphans. We took them to the mall to get school uniforms. They aren't allowed in school without a uniform. It took us too long getting uniforms, so when we went to Freedom park to meet a lady who was going to take us with her on her rounds in the poor section of town, she had already left. She is a health care worker who checks on the aids patients. So we drove around looking at the area. Platinum mines surround it. The workers get paid very little and the mines are putting out something in the air that is supposed to be 300 times the legal limit, but it is over looked because of how much money the mines make. A lot of visitors have sinus problems immediately upon arrival because of this. It can't be healthy either.

Friday we went shopping. It was a great tourist place, but it gets old real quick with all the vendors who are after you to buy their stuff. We would have continued to look around after we got what we came for, but didn't want the hassle anymore. On the way back, we checked in on Martha and the afternoon feeding. The daily feeding only recently started. It used to be once a week, and they are trying to get a good head count, so they know how much food to buy.

Saturday we went to Pilanesberg Park, which is a public game reserve. We saw lots of animals. A lioness stalking a giraffe, 2 male elephants fighting, tons of zebra. Derek was not feeling well that day, and by the time we got back Paul was not feeling good either. He had quite a fever and a bad case of stomach problems. He took a cold bath twice during the night to cool off. By morning he was feeling a lot better, which is good, since we had to head to the airport that day.

It was Sunday and we had all planned on going to church, but most everyone was feeling lousy. It seems it made the run through Derek's house, even the kids getting a slight touch of it. I think I was the only one it didn't affect. So we left after lunch and Derek dropped us in Johannesburg airport. We met a couple there we stayed with last year and had a meal together. It was great to see them again, but Rachel had bad news. She's a breast cancer survivor and she may have cancer again. We had an uneventful flight, up until we got to Chicago. It was so cold there, the fuel trucks were freezing up. Flights were late and canceled. Our connecting flight home was canceled. We should have been home at 2pm and didn't get home until 11pm. We changed gates for our flight 3 times before it finally left 30 minutes late. A day and a half later, we are still wondering if we will ever see our suitcases again. But we had a great trip.