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MISSIONARIES TO THE MAASAI OF KENYA

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Dear Friends,

It has been almost a year since Joshua and I sent out a paper newsletter. As we look back on this year and think of all that we have seen God accomplish, we are in awe. This year has been incredibly full, and we have learned to labor, to rest, and to pray to God as never before.

ENKINOSATA OROREI LE NKAI – EATING THE WORD OF GOD

During our last several months in Kenya we worked almost non-stop. God worked in us – together with a group of Maasai church leaders – to take a book of lessons, *Enkinosata Oorei Le Nkai*, from idea through to completion. The book is a parable-based curriculum of ten lessons on “eating the Word of God,” meaning hearing or reading the Word of God with understanding. Each of the ten lessons includes a preparation section for the teacher; the lesson itself with stories, explanations, scripture memorization, testimonies, and suggested applications; and an evaluation section. All but the final lesson, which is mostly a time of directed prayer, include a drama. It also contains detailed instructions

on how to use the curriculum, explaining the different parts, as well as some appendices. The teacher’s preparation section of each lesson ends with a prayer that we invite the teacher to join with us in

praying. Throughout the lessons, there is plenty of room for the teacher to write notes.

Through every stage of the task, we sent detailed prayer requests to those on our prayer team. It was wonderful to see how God answered those prayers and completed this book in a time frame that was humanly impossible.

When Joshua and I realized that the Maasai needed a parable-based curriculum with new Maasai parables, we were overwhelmed. We knew that we could not write parables that were true to Maasai culture since we had not lived among the Maasai long enough. It was humanly impossible. So, together with our prayer team, we began praying fervently over every aspect of the curriculum. We prayed especially that God would provide the parables needed for the lessons, as well as translators and editors to help us ensure that the parables and lessons were applicable and understandable to the Maasai people. God answered our prayers in amazing ways.

For example, through prayer, we decided we should have lessons on hearing, meditating on, studying, and memorizing the Word. However, we were not certain whether we should include a separate lesson on how to understand the Bible or include that as part of the other topics. One day, as I was reading the Bible and interceding for others in prayer, God brought to my mind the Ethiopian eunuch asking, “How can I understand unless someone explains it to me?” I was reminded



Ruth teaching during a weekend family & marriage seminar which we led for the church in Olepishet.

A PARABLE FOR THE MAASAI

Once there were three Maasai tribal elders. Like all Maasai men, they each had a Maasai sword. Now the first elder was a strong man, and he did not fear anything. Because he was so strong and brave, he stopped carrying his sword with him. Instead, he kept it in a safe place, hidden in his house. So one day when that elder went into the forest to search for a lost cow, he did not carry his sword with him. But before he found the cow, a hungry leopard found him! Even though that elder’s arms were very strong, because he did not have a sword, the leopard ate him.

The second elder was wiser than the elder who was eaten by the leopard. Even though he was also strong and brave, he always carried his sword with him. However, he did not take proper care of it. He did not use it very often, and he never oiled it. When the sword in its sheath became wet, he did not dry it. One day his favorite sheep became lost in the forest. Before he went to look for it, he made sure that his sword was in its sheath on his belt. Soon, he found his sheep and began to lead it back to his village, But before he emerged from the forest, he found a lioness who wanted to eat his sheep. Because he had his sword, the elder was not afraid. When he tried to draw the sword out of the sheath, it was stuck! The sheath had shrunk and the sword had rusted, so that the sheath held the sword tightly. While he was struggling to remove his weapon, the lioness killed both the man and his sheep.

The third elder was the wisest of all. Every day he carefully sharpened the blade of his sword and oiled it before putting into the sheath. Every morning he made sure that the sword was loose in its sheath so that he could remove it quickly if he needed it. He never left his house without securing the sword to himself on his belt. One day during the dry season when he was looking for a lost cow, he was prepared for any trouble he might find. And he did find trouble! When he found his lost cow, it had just been slain by the largest lion he had ever seen! In his anger, he drew forth his sword and attacked the lion. Even though he was not carrying his shield or his spear, he was able to defend himself with his sword because his disciplined practice of using it every day had given him great skill. As he was fighting the lion, two of the elder’s friends who were also in the forest heard the battle and ran with their spears to help him. Together, they slew the lion.

[This is an example of one of the parables that God gave to Joshua in answer to prayer. The Maasai find it very funny and true-to-life, but also to the point. It is found in the lesson about the importance of scripture memorization, hiding God’s Word in our hearts. It also points out the importance of accountability and community, instead of go-it-alone individualism, in our walk with the Lord.]

that the Holy Spirit is the one who explains the Word to us. I shared this with Joshua, and he replied, “Good. I think you should write that lesson.”

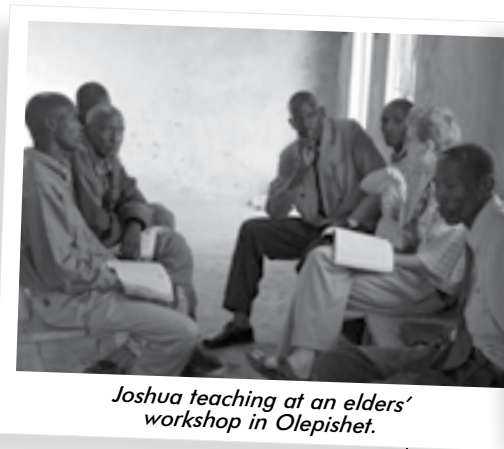
There were two difficulties with this. One was time, and the other was that the idea God had provided was still only half a lesson. I continued to pray. We have one computer, so only one of us could work on the lessons at a time. After several days of praying and listening, I discovered that I could write the lesson while Joshua was gone to a meeting where he did not require the computer. However, the children and the visitors did not know of these plans, and Joshua arrived home at lunchtime before I had found any opportunity to write. He gave me the computer for the afternoon so I could work on the lesson, but I still had only half of the lesson. I tried to write something anyway, but it was redundant; again I prayed for God to provide the other half.

That evening, after the children were in bed, Joshua and I had quiet to talk together. He shared that the man with whom he had met that morning had given him an outline for a potential lesson on faith and obedience. Joshua showed it to me, and we agreed that it was a good lesson but probably would not fit into the current curriculum. Then God opened my eyes. This was the second half. We cannot understand until after we have believed and obeyed. He showed me how Alitza loved to ask “why?” but was never fully convinced, because understanding follows faith and obedience. There was a parable easily adapted to the Maasai culture.

This is just one of the many acts of God we saw as we wrote this book. Three of the lessons were co-written by Maasai



Here are most of our writer-editors for the Enkinosata Orerei Le Nkai project: (standing) Samuel ole Mugur, John M. Neiliang, Jackson ole Meing’ati (with son), Jonathan ole Narasha; (kneeling) Jacob ole Sinkwa, Patrick ole Sayialel, Jim Saruni ole Kipees, Paul K. Lupempe (another Maasai who just joined the picture); (sitting) Francis K. Yenke, Nolari (Jackson’s wife), James T. Sinkwa, Ng’oto Tiwai (with son). Not pictured are James Olormuyei ole Kijape, Kijuku ole Kisime, Cosmas Lemein, James Ole Sakat. God provided many other helpers as well.



Joshua teaching at an elders’ workshop in Olepishet.



The Lord’s Day: Prayer time during the worship service at Olepishet.

church leaders. Many of the parables came from conversations (in Maa) with our houseworker, who knows his culture very well but who is illiterate and unfamiliar with most of the Bible, though he attends church regularly. God provided all the testimonies and dramas we needed for the lessons. We prayed that God would provide a translator to help us get the lessons into deep and fluent Maa. Patrick Sayialel, whom God gave us as we prayed for wisdom, was the right one for the work. He worked together with another young man from his congregation, and did an excellent job. But, more importantly, he told us afterward that before he translated each lesson, he prayed over it – not only for the translation itself, but also for the future effectiveness of it.

In November, Joshua and I invited many of the Maasai church leaders to join us in editing the curriculum for content and grammar. It was a wonderful experience, and the Maasai leaders were very excited about the book. One of them told us that as he was working on one of the lessons, God convicted him that he was teaching the church things he, himself, was not practicing. Another said he wished someone were teaching him the lessons instead of him reading them. And still another told us, “I have a vision. I have a vision now. I never knew that we could do something like this, but you have shown us the way forward.” With the help of the Maasai, we were able to take the curriculum to the printer in December before we left for furlough, and in January, the books were ready and delivered to the Maasai church leaders.

The Maasai church leaders are so excited about these lessons that they’ve shared about them with their Turkana brothers and sisters. Now the Turkana church leaders have requested that Joshua provide them with an English version of the lessons that they can translate into the Turkana language. Pray with us in this matter. While the Maasai and the Turkana

are similar in culture, there are many differences, and parts of the curriculum will need to be adapted.

FURLOUGH

We returned to the US for furlough just before Christmas. We had just enough time to make cameo appearances in each of our home congregations and let the grandparents see the children before driving out to Nebraska. We spent the spring term at Nebraska Christian College, serving as resident missionaries and missions professors. Joshua enjoyed the classes he taught. I enjoyed occasionally substituting for him. God blessed us both with opportunities to mentor and disciple several of the Bible college students. One of the highlights of our semester was being able to take part in a prayer ministry. On Tuesday nights, several students would come over to our (on-campus) apartment at 5 for prayer, and then for supper at 6. (They didn’t seem to mind missing dinner in the cafeteria.) It was wonderful to see God at work in the lives of the students.

Besides home-school and house responsibilities, I spent a large portion of my time in prayer for Joshua’s students and others I was mentoring. In this also, I saw many amazing answers to prayer and learned to know God better than ever before. In his mostly freshman class entitled Personal Evangelism, Joshua required his students to do a one-page reflection paper for each day’s reading assignment. I read through them and prayed over them, asking God to show me how to pray for each student. Over the course of the semester, I sent a note to each student sharing with them the Scriptures I was praying over them. Because of this I read through most of the reflections twice.



During finals week, some Nebraska Christian College students industriously prepare for their exams ... or just goof off after our prayer ministry and meal on a Tuesday night. They are all enjoying Joshua’s spiced Indian chai.

We pray that we will be receptive to the leading of God’s Spirit so that we may respond in obedience. Sometimes God’s plan and purpose diverts us from our planned schedules. During the finals week at Nebraska Christian College, Ruth and the girls were with family in Tennessee while I was “batching it” on campus. On the last night of the semester, an issue came up with one of the students we had been mentoring. It was 10 pm, and I was ready to send him a quick email and go to bed and forget it. So I did send a quick email, but God really laid him on my heart and the Spirit wouldn’t let me alone. So instead of going to bed, I chose to be available and obedient. Walking over to the dorm, I found his room. He was the only one there, and I brought up the issue.

What happened next was all about God, who already had begun working repentance in his heart. We had a godly time of confession, prayer, counsel, and encouragement. I believe that God has a wonderful purpose and plan for this young man in the extension of His kingdom. It was humbling and rewarding to be used by our Lord to help this student remain in the Lord and to renew his consecration.

Jesus did NOT tell us to “go and make converts.” Instead, our Lord commands us, “as you go, make DISCIPLES.” What a wonderful privilege it is to disciple others!

Joshua

One day, toward the end of the semester, as I was reading through one student's reflections, I was appalled to see that in a reflection from the middle of the semester, she had asked whether she could come to see us and talk with us. Somehow, though I had prayed for her many times during the semester, we had missed this, and she had missed our invitation to all the students to drop by anytime. The accuser attacked me with guilt, and I felt very overwhelmed. After a short time of struggle, through

God's Spirit, I told the accuser I would not accept guilt, declaring that God could have blinded me for a purpose. I prayed and asked God to judge me, and then I invited the student over.

When she came over, we shared a meal with her. Then I talked with her for a couple of hours. I shared with her many of the things God had been teaching me over the last year and especially that semester. She shared with me the things with which she had been struggling. After I had prayed with her, I asked her whether God had accomplished His purpose for bringing her to our house. After thinking a minute, she replied to me that when she had asked whether she could visit us because she knew we were praying for her, she had been really struggling, but that it was good that we had not answered her. She told me that God had wanted her to come to Him, but she had been trying to go to others. Because we did not

answer, she was compelled to wrestle it out with God Himself, and she had grown immensely through it. That evening, God showed me His answers to my prayers for her and answered my prayer that He judge me by vindicating me.

During the late spring and through this summer, Joshua and I are spending most of our time in Virginia and Tennessee visiting supporting churches and family. We hope to return to Kenya at the end of the summer.

PRAISES

- For what God has worked in us and through us during our first term.
- For the completion of the "Eating the Word of God" book of lessons.
- We were blessed with a wonderful time during the first part of our furlough serving at Nebraska Christian College.
- For the faithful support partners (prayer and financial) with whom God has already provided us.

PRAYER REQUESTS

- Join us in praying Isaiah 44:3 for the Maasai: That God "will pour out water on the thirsty land" and pour out Spirit upon the Maasai people.
- Who will "stand in the gap" (Ezekiel 22:30)? Pray that God will provide committed prayer partners for our ministry among the Maasai.
- Philippians 4:19 says "my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Pray that God will be faithful to provide for all of the needs of our ministry. We need to be fully supported before we are able to return.
- The apostles themselves cried out to Jesus, "increase our faith!" (Luke 17:5). Pray that God will continue to increase our faith and that He will "pour out his Spirit" on both us and our children (Ezekiel 22:30).

In Christ,

Joshua & Ruth

Ruth & Joshua Barron



Life in America

The children made a good transition from the field back to life in America. One of the times when we went sledding, though, it was just too cold for our African girls. "Momma," shivered Alitza, "I want to go back to Kenya where it is warmer than colder instead of here in America where it is colder than warmer."

We are frequently reminded that we are sojourners wherever we are. Often when we console the children on a long road trip with "We're almost home." Hannah asks us quizzically, "Home in Kenya?"

Eliana (as some of you with good memories might suspect) is quite at home in the car. On a recent road trip, Joshua's sister (who was helping Ruth with the girls during her vacation) offered to take a turn driving. Eliana heard the offer and exclaimed, "I will drive!" When Aunt Michelle beat her to the driver's seat, Eliana reproachfully protested, "I do drive! I do drive!"

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