

May 2014

Isaiah's changed life spoke loudly to everyone who knew him. One day his brother-in-law came to see him. "How did you stop drinking? Did those white people give you some kind of medicine?" When Isaiah answered that it was not medication but Jesus who had taken away his cravings, his friend said, "Take me to those people right now. I want what you have!" So Peter and Deborah now had Isaiah and Joseph as their daily Bible students. Joseph's Muslim wife was thrilled when he stopped drinking and started taking good care of her and their five children. And Joseph told everyone that Jesus had set him free.

The best thing, we knew, would be for a Tanzanian pastor to perform the baptisms. And the best place would be in the village, where anyone who wanted to could observe. Because the rains continued and water was plentiful, Colin asked our landlords if we could have permission to dig out the shallow stream that ran between our houses, then fill in the hole after the baptisms. They asked a few questions. What was baptism anyway? If we held baptisms in their stream, would that make the water holy? Could people still wash clothes and bathe in it later? When we assured them that performing the baptisms in their stream would not change the holiness of the water, they gave their permission to hold them there.

The pastor we knew was in Bethany. On our next town trip we asked him if he would be willing to come meet with the men, then baptize them. He was glad to begin planning to do so. The men were nervous, but committed.

Dengue fever struck our team without warning. One day they were well, then suddenly Naomi, Mary and little Sam all were seriously ill. In consultation with doctors in Kenya, we realized they needed to get to a hospital. But how to evacuate? Muddy slick roads made driving to Dar es Salaam impossible. Finally we were able to call for an airplane to evacuate them from the small airport at Bethany to Kijabe hospital in Kenya. Martha accompanied Naomi, and Joseph went along to help care for Adam, Mary, and little Sam. Naomi was so weak she had to be supported to walk along the narrow path from her house on the hill down to where the Land Cruiser waited. They were cared for in a wonderful way at Kijabe and returned in a week, much rested and healthier.

Meanwhile, Ruth and Esther were excitedly preparing to move into the house in Nazareth. It needed some repairs, and they bought a solar panel so they could have lights at night. On the day we moved them in, their neighbors in Cana grieved, and their neighbors in Nazareth brought gifts. After their furniture and belongings were moved in and settled a little, the team gathered to pray for the Lord's blessing on the house. Since it was known to have a curse on it, we wanted to show that Jesus' power was stronger than any curse. The men on the team walked around the house and prayed in the yard; the women walked from room to room and prayed for the Lord to cleanse and use each one. Then finally we all gathered in the small living room to pray a final prayer together. To our dismay, Esther got malaria. Not once

but twice. Finally it occurred to Colin to ask if she was sleeping under a net and taking any prophylaxis. No... When she did, the malaria episodes stopped. Thank you, Lord. People were amazed that our two ladies were living in a house that was “cursed,” and staying healthy. We told them Jesus was very powerful.

Excitement was in the air as our team looked forward to a teacher to arrive, who would train us in Bible storying techniques. He would meet with us for a week in Cana, then we could begin practicing what he taught us, then we’d meet again in a few months for another week of training. We were beginning to know enough about the culture and we’d shared enough Bible stories informally that we could intuit where were some of the gaps in people’s understanding of God. We would have been even more excited if we had known how timely that training would be.

