

November-December 2014

One great benefit of having four more Christians living in Cana for four weeks was the number of people they met and were able to talk with during their stay. Both of the men, particularly, made many friends and had a tremendous impact. In mid-November our team took a long weekend in Bethany to debrief the experience with the “quest-guests,” then we drove them to Dar for their return home. All of us scattered for a couple of weeks...Ruth was going to see a friend in Egypt, Esther went to the USA for her grandmother’s wedding, Martha also went back for a wedding, and Martha for the birth of her special friend’s twins. Joseph and Mary and the boys took some rest time in Dar; Peter and Deborah and their children stayed in Cana; Colin and I went to an evangelists’ conference.

The rains began and everyone started digging their fields. Rain fell. Politicians made speeches in anticipation of elections, with loudspeakers. Poles for electric wires were being strung from the main highway all the way through every small village on the road, right to the end. There were even rumors of a cell phone tower being put up in a village nearby. We hoped that whatever politicians were elected would prove to be friendly to our team’s presence in the village.

Just before we left the village, a number of people asked our team for gospels of John to read, and one family asked if they could keep the player that had a Swahili recording of the New Testament to listen to. We had numerous conversations with people who were asking questions. Was Jesus really God? How could God die for our sins? What about good works? What makes a person a Christian?

When we returned to the village, we began sharing the new story we had crafted and translated, that of the annunciation to Mary and then the following story of Jesus’ birth. When people heard the annunciation account, they often said, “OHHH, that is why you Christians say that Jesus is the Son of God!”

During our absence, a young boy who wanted water tried to find a way to tap into our tank. He broke the pipe, and 1200 gallons of water began flowing out onto the ground. In a panic, he ran to the neighbors’ for help. They all came and tried to rescue the situation, but it was irremediable, so they gathered every empty container they had and tried to save the water for their use. When we got home, the tank was still broken and empty. I hired a couple of young girls to haul buckets of water for me from the well every day until the tank could be fixed. God brought Moses to our group meeting on Sunday, and after worship time and lunch, he climbed into the tank and worked with Colin till it was repaired. Then he wanted to talk about Jesus, and about Christianity versus Islam. We could tell that this young man was pondering, investigating, considering all he had heard at his Islamic school versus all he was hearing from us.

Two hundred people attended our Christmas party that year, held in downtown Cana, in Joseph and Mary’s front yard. We served goat that our team had butchered

early that morning, rice and vegetables. The Assembly of God church's children's choir sang a couple of songs about Jesus' birth. The Catholic catechist told the story of the prodigal son. Our team sang several songs and acted out the Christmas story, complete with a couple of drunk men who spontaneously joined the "shepherds." A special treat for Colin and me was that our son Tim was able to be with us from the USA. Politicians came; Muslims came; people from far and wide brought their friends. Colin gave the gospel, and invited anyone who wanted prayer to stay afterwards and we would pray for them. Two of my friends, Lydia and Sharon, stayed and asked me to pray because Lydia had a strange swelling in her face.

That evening, as Joseph walked past the shop of a prominent businessman, the man called, "Come here!" He then launched into a fierce diatribe against our public religious celebration. Joseph looked and listened, and felt a wave of deep love for the man. Sitting beside him, he said gently, "When you invited me to come share in your religious celebration, didn't I come? And this is the time when we celebrate the birth of our Savior, good news for all people." His soft answer turned away the man's wrath.

