

In the tracks of a missionary – Chapter 18

The paths we trod are vast and varied, diverse as the personalities we possess. Similarly, a missionary's journey is just as diverse as those who traverse those roads. We have learned how differentiating personalities mattered not to our Lord. The Apostle John was the calm thinker; while Peter was the impulsive doer. So it is with us!

Since our return from Sri Lanka, the Father has opened some truly encouraging doors. We have become totally independent of any local organisation or mission. We now leave it to the Father to bring in the hearers. Five months down the road, Tom teaches every Saturday, alternating between two locations, Barberton ("Bubez" conference venue) and Matsulu, a rural village, over an hour from Barberton where we live, teaching anywhere from 4 to 6 hours each day. And most of those who first attended, continue to attend. The majority of those attending are local pastors, including women who also have a great desire to learn. In fact, we have found that South African women are not only strong in character, but strong in their beliefs and some know more of the Word of God than their own pastors. It has been very encouraging to see the continuity.

We from the Western world have all the "necessities" of life available to us. But a simple matter of a "baby-sitter" is not available to most, especially those in rural areas. Here is a young, single mother, Zabelle, who has attended Tom's classes consistently for the past four months. She has no one to care for her baby, whose name is "Humble," but has a desire to learn the Word of

God. Most African mothers carry their babes on their back, wrapped in a blanket and tied in front. African children are very respectful of parents and will generally sit quietly, either with their parents or by themselves. Teachers, especially missionaries, need be empathetic, not making too much of an issue of children, or even if a mother breast-feeds her baby to keep him quiet.



Junior congregation



Zabelle taking notes with *Humble* on her back

Over the years, we have been taught that God uses prepared believers. As we prepare God provides the hearers. And He has provided even more. God also provided a conference venue in Barberton and a church in Matsulu. The church is one of Tom's former students, David Mamba, who

has been building his church, literally brick by brick for the past 9 years. He now has electricity, long-drop toilets (!) but no running water.

When Tom asked David what his greatest need was (*thinking he may ask for cement or bricks to complete his building*), he answered, "*Knowledge! Baba (a term of respect), we need Knowledge of God's Word.*"



Matsulu group with Patience & her son Prince out front.



Pastor David Mamba



Taking notes using stools as tables



During sessions, thought-provoking questions are always posed. One contentious issue, unsurprisingly, is always eternal security, which opens the door to teach the Essence of God. Sin and “continuous sinning” continue to be the Number 1 misunderstood item! One pastor used the illustration of a father who offered himself to the Judge to pay the penalty of death for his son’s crime of murder. The son was released and committed more murders! “What now?” asked the pastor, “since the substitute sacrifice had already been made?” This simple, but Biblically incorrect illustration led Tom to teach the principles of forgiveness and the Angelic Conflict (*phenomenal & impactful lessons taught by our two Pastors*). The truth of 1John 1:9 is like attempting to get through a thick rhinoceros hide! Tom taught from the standpoint of a Courtroom tableau: The Believer as the Defendant; Satan as the Accuser; Jesus Christ as our Advocate; and God the Father as Supreme Court Judge. And above all, Man’s *reason* for being created.



Pastor Boy

Tom knows a spattering of Zulu, and will use it to quote scripture and very basic teaching. Fortunately, most South Africans, especially the younger generation speak English. So most teaching is done in English. However, two older pastors (“Boy & Ben” a Zulu & a Swazi), who know very little English, attend faithfully and are often asked to read a passage in their own language. Both men had attended Tom’s classes last year when he taught at another location in Matsulu. Pastor Boy reads in a rich baritone voice. They sit in the front row and are meticulous in taking down scripture references, even using small broken pencils. We give all attendees study-guides/lesson printouts to assist them with taking notes, plus, notebooks and pens.

Pastor Boy is determined and proud as a strong male giraffe reaching for the highest branches! In the previous apartheid generation, black males were often called “Boys,” while females were called “Sissy.” Their birth or family names were rarely used. Today, to call someone “boy” is a disparaging term. Pastor Boy (in his mid-80’s), never knew another name. When asked to introduce himself, he explains his name as the only name he’s ever known. He comes from the “Zionist” church background, which in one of the largest African religious sects. They are known to be heretical, but Pastor Boy has clearly heard the Gospel numerous times. He shows great interest in learning the Word, sitting quietly and respectfully for the entire 5 to 6 hours of teaching, with just a brief refreshment break of bread, tea and coffee between sessions.

The reason for long hours of teaching is because most are unable to attend during the week or in the evenings. The quiet nights come to life in perilous ways, as does the African Bush. Most travel long distances. So when they do meet, they prefer to get as much learning as possible at one time; no different to when the Apostle Paul taught. Fortunately, we have not had anyone fall out of a window!

The *Bubez* Venue is different, with a varied group of pastors and leaders from the Barberton community in which we live. This group is more educated, English speaking and easier to teach. Within this group there are pastors and church elders. There are also ladies (commonly known as Mama’s), two of whom are employed within a maximum-security prison as wardens and “counsellors.” One lady, Maatlape, is chief executive of the local government hospital. She has asked Tom to conduct Christian Professionalism training amongst her staff, doctors and nurses at the hospital. Dates have been scheduled starting in August. One elderly, distinguished pastor, said he wished he had known Tom years ago because he has learnt so much in these few short months.

God provides encouragement to distant missionaries in different ways. We may not be able to easily pick up the telephone to chat with a family or loved ones, or even meet over a cuppa with like-minded believers. But what the Father has given us is far greater:



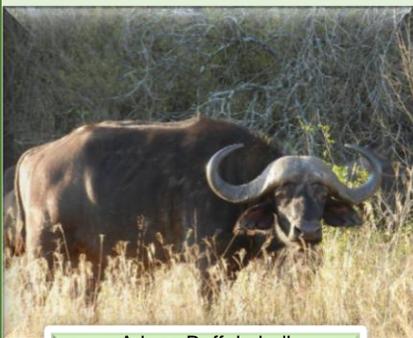
The joy and enrichment from the positive responses from these pastors and attendees, make it all the worthwhile and more!



"Bubez" conference room in Barberton

We chuckle at hearing of Houston's blocked roads as construction and progress grows.....we too have "blocked roads." The most *interesting* is when workers are in civil unrest. Then vandalism is rampant. Burning car tyres (tires), trees and logs as barricades are common occurrences when they are in strike-mode; stoning and burning of vehicles, and sometimes even persons. On a couple of occasions, in Jo'burg and around here in Barberton, a Gold Mining town where strikes on the Mines are common, Tom has had to literally hit foot-to-floor, "hot-footing" over burning barricades. But our Guardian Angels certainly work overtime! In the 27+ years in SA, we have never been struck, held-up, auto damaged, or personally injured; never even accosted.

Most of you read our recent account of "~~Fire Proof~~," about the fires that surrounded our home. As noted, our house was totally protected by none other than *The Divine Wall of Fire*. The house was not touched by the flames, nor was a hair on our head singed! In fact, the owner was glad to get rid of that tree-house, as she saw it as "unstable & unsafe." (*Providential Protection!*) We have been overwhelmed with y'all's responses, consisting of several encouraging words and passages, such as: Zechariah 2:5; Daniel 3:25 and ***Isaiah 43:2*** ***When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; when you go through the rivers, they will not overwhelm you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, and the flames will not set you ablaze.*** Our "episode" seems to have touched many of you in realising just how exceedingly God protects His children. Many have *taken* assurance from this event, and in return, *given* us encouragement. Isn't that how the Body of Christ works? We are ever so grateful for your prayers of support and encouragement. **Thank you!!**



A lone Buffalo bull

Sometimes we retreat to the wild, untamed tranquility of the African Bush. Out of the scattering herd of zebra and wildebeest, we see a lone bull standing off in the distance, observing us. Some of the animals return to the herd seeking security and companionship, while others go **in search of** "greener grass," unaware that only drought and danger lie in the tall dry grasses of the Savannah. But the bull stands alone. So it is with so many, both young and old whom we have encountered and taught. Some never leave the false security of the herd. Others wander, following their leader. But the lone bull stands his ground, content and confident, even amidst the dangers that might befall him.



Zebra & Wildebeest
Generally hang out together

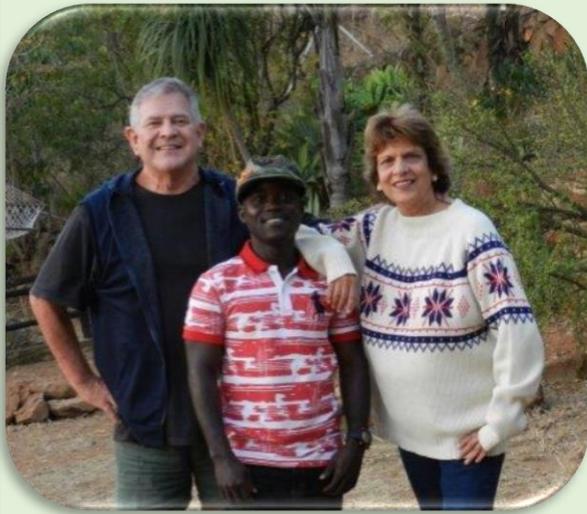


Danger in the tall dry grass



In this life and as missionaries, we may never know the direction of the herd, or the outcome of the lone bull. But in spite of what may lie in the tall dry grasses of false teachers and doctrines, we are confident of this one thing - God's absolute Promise:

His Word will accomplish what He desires and will not return to Him empty (Isaiah 55:11).



We ask you to please remember Aristide in prayer. We have mentioned him in previous updates. He is from Benin, Northwest Africa, and is currently registered at the most conservative, evangelical and fundamental Bible Seminary in the country: *Union Bible Institute*. Three years ago, Aristide could not speak English, as French was his mother-tongue. He persevered, and today is in his 2nd year at the Seminary, and is on par and doing exceptionally well in his pursuit of a BTh (Bachelor of Theology). Aristide is one of those rare young bulls who separated from the herd and is drinking from the watering hole of God's Word. He recently spent his entire June/July school break with us.

Tom & Cheryl are a Team. It was on the 15th July 2011, when the head of OGWM called to tell Tom that we had been accepted as missionaries. Eight years later on, our calendar reminds us each year on this date: *What an extraordinary Plan the Father has laid out for us!* It's been a most remarkable Journey! And with each year, our lives continue to be further enriched, abundantly more so by His overwhelming Grace!! On the 7th July, we celebrated our 42nd Anniversary. My, how time has flown. But God's Grace and Integrity continue to carry this Team, in and through many waters, bitter and sweet. Even these updates are a Team effort. That's Grace!!

Prayer Request: That God will continue to provide opportunities for the Molinar Mission to reach local pastors with the Word of God: Teaching His Word, taking care of His sheep, and feeding them the Bread of Truth (John 21:15-17).