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But thanks be to God who giveth the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 1Cor. 15:57

September 04, 2008

After a long flight from the United States through Bogotá Columbia, The Denham family was glad to be home in Brazil. I was able to get a couple hours of rest before heading back to the airport for the long journey to the annual FIEL pastors conference in Nampula, Mozambique, where I accompanied Pastor Gilson from Brazil, and Kevin Millard, the missionary who oversees the operations of the Adopt a Pastor Project.

As we drove up to the international departures terminal in Sao Paulo, the car we were driving suddenly broke down and came to a halt. We were in a rush to check in, but I could not help noticing how the Lord had allowed us to just make it to the airport before the car quit working. After a few hours of delay, we were off to South Africa, where we then changed planes on to Mozambique. Nine hours later, we were on African soil. Unfortunately we missed our connecting flight to Mozambique, but caught the next flight out later that night.

Arriving in Maputo, Mozambique, we exited the plane down the stairs, and walked a few yards into the arrival area. The night was cool, as it is winter in the southern hemisphere. All we could hope for, at this point, was that our luggage had made it. We were not surprised when the last of the bags had come out on



Life on the streets of Nampula

the small primitive baggage belt--ours weren't there. I asked a woman nearby were we would go to report bags that had not shown up. She pointed me in the direction, and muttered something



One of the pastor's wives in traditional african attire

in Portuguese, but in an accent nowhere close to what I could understand. Upon exiting customs without our luggage, we were met by Karl Peterson, one of the two missionaries who are responsible for the FIEL conference there. We sent Pastor Gilson and Kevin on to the hotel, and we went after the luggage. Thankfully, we found out the luggage had arrived on an earlier flight, and was locked in the customs area. The only problem was that at that time, customs was closed. With our flight being very early the next morning to Nampula, the site of the conference, we needed to get that sorted out as soon as possible. After roaming the airport for several hours, we were able to find the last customs agent on site, and were very thankful that he agreed to release our luggage. As it turned out, the agent had just been scolded by his superior for abandoning his post, so he did not even

The city of Nampula, 3rd largest in Mozambique



Pastors who attended the Conference

care to charge us duty on all the literature that was overflowing from our suitcases! It was exciting to see the Lord use all these circumstances to demonstrate His provision.

After a very short rest, we were back at the Maputo airport, checking in for the two-hour flight to Nampula. Karl had warned us how we needed to wrap our entire checked luggage because theft was a problem. So when we arrived in Nampula, we were shocked to find out that Karl's laptop had been stolen and his bag had been cut open! I had packed my Camera in my suitcase, as my carry on was overweight, but thankfully it had gone unnoticed by the thieves. Again, I was aware of the Lord's hand of protection upon us!

Upon arriving in Nampula, we were met by Dr Charles Woodrow and his children in an old military truck. It was a scene right out of Indiana Jones! We climbed up the British desert Camo truck, and sat in the back on plastic lawn chairs. As we drove through the town, it appeared as though there had not been any investment in the city or its roads since the Portuguese were run out of town during the communist revolution in the 70's. People were everywhere, but not really going anywhere. Many people are unemployed, and just sitting and standing along the roadside. The sight of all these white people in this big truck must have been a spectacle for them. (Especially because all of Dr. Woodrow's kids are blond with blue eyes.)

As we entered into their walled compound, we were able to

see the foundations of the FUTURE hospital that Dr. Woodrow is building. Mrs. Woodrow met us with cold lemonade, and a huge smile! Once we settled into our bedrooms, which the children graciously gave up, I went out into the back yard where the kids were playing. They proceeded to point out a pair of old shipping containers where they store their food. The also told me that during their first years there in Nampula, when they were the only missionaries, all seven of them lived in these 2 small metal containers. I thought I had it tough living in a one bedroom home when I was little!

The sun was just going down when I felt the mosquitos attacking me like I was a steak dinner. I asked them if they had ever had Malaria, To my surprise all of them have, and they were all taking malaria medicine once a week. I had not taken that prevention, so this news sent me running into the house for my mosquito spray! I was a little relieved when they told me that winter is a little safer!!

After a wonderful welcome dinner and introductions, we all rushed off to bed to prepare for the long days ahead at the conference. The site chosen for the conference is a place called SIL, an acronym for a center of Languages. It is a center for Wycliff Bible Translators that has worked well for hosting the event. Upon arriving there the next morning, I was put in charge of taking all the photos of the Pastors in the Adopt a Pastor Project, as well as photographing all the conference goers. It was a great chance for me to be able to personally meet each one, and extend our greetings in the name of FIEL.

While I photographed the arriving pastors, Kevin Millard



Missionary kids helping at check-in

and Karl Peterson (who lives in South Africa and is one of the directors of the event), personally met the arriving pastors, and handled the registration. Dr Woodrow, handled all the logistics and details of making the conference happen. He masterfully runs a tight ship,





Pastor from the Adopt a Pastor Project enjoy fellowship

and handled everything from the meals to the vans that took people home in the evening after the messages. Pr Gilson, from Brazil, taught a series of messages from Ephesians 1-3, rich in doctrine and foundational teaching, while Pr Ronald Kalafungwa, from Zambia, spoke on Christian living from Ephesians 4-6. Both speakers were well received and were used of the Lord to meet many needs in the hearts of the pastors and their wives. We were so encouraged to see and hear their responses to the preaching of the word. It is also interesting to note that over 30% of the attendees stayed another week for an additional seminar that would help prepare the pastors in a more interactive personal way. Pr Gilson, taught on Expository preaching, and even had some of the men preach as part of the course. Dr Woodrow, who last year had to cancel his course for lack of interest, had a class of 30 on Systematic Theology.

The bookstore is always a high point of the conference, and is the only place to buy Christian books in the city of Nampula. When the conference is not going on, a small bookshop is



maintained in the little downtown of the city, and is a place where people may come and read good books as well as purchase them at subsidized prices. We were encouraged to see that over 780 books were sold at the conference. Along

with this, we were able to give the pastors John Piper's "For Your Joy" booklet, and a small handbook on systematic theology.

It is exciting to see the Lord blessing the work there, and to see the fruit of the seeds planted in the lives of the people there. Since the end of the civil war, there has been little investment



The Conference Cafeteria



The Conference Kitchen. Note chickens in tubs.

in Mozambique which is one of the poorest countries on the planet. They are not forgotten. We need to pray for these men and women who take up their crosses daily and are teaching and preaching to those in this remote land. Being there among them, seeing the way they love our Lord and worship Him with all they have challenges us to do all we can to stand behind them and equip them with the life-changing message of the Gospel.

On my flight back to Johannesburg, I had the privilege of sitting next to a well-dressed man who went on to tell me he was a diplomat on his way to Spain to represent Mozambique. I noticed in his hand a book on Islam someone had given him. I was able to also give him the "For Your Joy" book, and share Christ with him. On an earlier flight I also met a retired Mormon couple from Arizona, who was there investing their lives in their work. This should challenge all of us to do all we can, first to pray for the work in these various places, but also, when possible, to go and share with the world who Christ is and what he has done for us.

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We look forward to seeing you all again.

In Christ,

Rick, Kimberlie, James and Lilah Denham

For more information about Fiel and Adopt a Pastor Project, visit our web site:

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