

Challenging Start To Our Medical Mission

On Saturday morning (about 5:00 am), I got a call informing me that Moonga had had a wreck somewhere between Serenje and Mkushi on his way back from delivering the first bus load of students on our Medical Mission. The plan was as follows. Although we bought two buses from Japan a year ago, neither has yet been delivered to us. However, the man who sold us the buses loaned us his bus about three months ago which we could use until our buses arrive. Because we need two buses for the Medical Mission (which is scheduled to start this coming Tuesday), we have been pushing the dealer to deliver one of the two buses in time for the Medical Mission. Last week was a week full of endless government paperwork and last minute hurdles as we tried to clear the bus through customs (which was at the Tanzania-Zambian border). Finally the bus was cleared, but the dealer had not even sent a driver to drive it down to us here in Lusaka. We are hopeful that the bus (1997 Toyota Coaster) will be delivered late today (Sunday) and we can get it cleared through Interpol on Monday in time for the Medical Mission on Tuesday.

However, because we just have the one bus (borrowed bus), it was necessary that we make it do the work of two buses. The plan was that Moonga (one of our Mission Coordinators) would drive three student Mission Teams up on Friday. We have divided our 72 students into six groups and each group is to spend two weeks doing a Mission Campaign in each of the six villages that we will visit on our Medical Mission. The goal is to plant a church in each of these six villages this summer. So, early on Friday morning, Moonga loaded up three of the mission teams, pulling a trailer behind filled with luggage and supplies for the two weeks. By late on Friday Moonga had delivered all three of the mission teams.

The plan was for Moonga to return late on Friday night so that another driver could take over and deliver the three remaining mission teams on Saturday, returning late Saturday night so that the bus could go to the airport early on Sunday morning (today) to pick up the 28 Americans coming over for the medical mission. The hope was that our new bus would be ready on Tuesday when we all are scheduled to travel north for the Medical Mission.

But, as I said above, I was awaked at 5:00 am on Saturday morning with news that Moonga had had an accident on his return trip (see pictures below). Apparently, a truck was driving down the middle of the road (in the middle of the night) and Moonga had to swerve off onto the shoulder of the road to avoid a head-on collision; but, in so doing, he lost control and hit some kind of a building. Both he and Wisdom (who was riding with him) were tossed forward and were hit by the broken glass as the windshield exploded. Moonga's left hand was badly cut and Wisdom (who was thrown forward) hit his head and was badly cut on his right arm. Thankfully, there was a clinic that was nearby and they were able to get some basic medical attention the next morning when the clinic opened up. Wisdom's little finger was almost severed and is now infected.

We were not told all this information at first - only that they had gone into a ditch and couldn't restart the bus (and had a flat tire on the trailer). Because we really struggling financially, we had to come up with a new plan that would save us as much as possible (fuel is now more than \$8.00 per gallon). So, we decided to send Michael (our mechanic) northward toward where Moonga was in the Canter (2-ton, flat-bed truck) and for Michael to take as many of the other three mission teams as possible (delivering them on the way up). The plan was for Michael to deliver the

students, fix the bus, and to drive it back on Sunday. So, we awoke the students and began rushing around trying to load up the truck with as many students as the police would allow us to carry.



At some point in all this rushed preparation, I checked my email only to discover that the American medical team had missed their connection in Chicago because the first flight out of Memphis had been delayed – the whole group was stranded in Chicago over night. It appears that they have now rescheduled everyone, but there are still some doubts about whether or not there will be seats available on the two flights up from South Africa.

After a few emails to address this problem, we returned to efforts to get Michael and the three mission teams off. Next problem? The students called me to report that they couldn't find the tents they needed as the Mission Coordinator who has the keys to the store room had left the day before and failed to leave the keys. We managed to get into the store room only to discover that the first three teams took the best tents and left behind those tents that were missing parts (e.g., poles separated from the tents and mixed up with other tents, missing poles, etc). What a mess! Forget that we are in a hurry. The only thing we could do is pull all the tents out on the ground and do what we could to figure out what tents we could put together from all the mixed up parts. After more than two hours of pitching tents, we finally had the three teams matched up with enough salvaged tents, and off they went (see picture below). As you can see, they were fully loaded with 25 people and all their equipment and supplies. But, not so fast, just north of Lusaka the police stopped them and make them remove three of the students – something that required us to drive 30 miles to the north of town to pick up the three stranded students.



At 8:00 pm I got a call from Moonga asking where Michael was as they were cold and injured and didn't know what to do (it is winter time here). Finally Michael made it to where Moonga was and reported the full extent of the damages (which was much more than what I had been informed of). He was (even in the dark) able to get the bus running again, but the trailer had more than a flat tire. It had a broken axle. And, if that wasn't enough, Michael informed me that the Canter was not charging and that he had had to drive without lights in order to make it to where Moonga was! I suggested that they just spend the night there and deal with it in the morning. I had had enough and I went to bed (although I didn't sleep much).

This morning I awoke and called Michael and, to my great surprise, they had decided they didn't want to spend the night in the bush in the middle of nowhere and had dismantled the trailer so they could put it on the Canter and had driven 150 kms to Kapiri Mposhi to spend the night. And, to my surprise, they arrived back here at Mapepe about 2:00 pm this afternoon (just a few minutes ago).

So, what's our plan now? The borrowed (wrecked) bus is now unusable. Michael has now off-loaded the trailer and hopes to get it repaired by tomorrow (as we desperately need it for the medical mission). We also have been informed that our new bus has finally left the border and is currently in transit and should arrive about midnight tonight. This give us hope that it will, in fact, be ready by Tuesday. I also called our good friend, Kennedy Mukuka, who runs a school up in Kabwe and he has now agreed to let us use his bus for the medical mission. His driver is now on the way with this bus. And, the last word we got from the American medical team is that they are now on their way across the Atlantic and should arrive some time tomorrow, Lord willing. The biggest question now is whether or not all their luggage will arrive with them! (luggage which contains many things that we need for the medical mission). And, hopefully, Michael will have the broken trailer repaired and fix whatever is not working on the Canter (recharging problem). So, if all this happens, then we should be good to go on Tuesday morning!

Do you get the feeling that Satan might be trying to disrupt our efforts to do God's work here in Zambia! Joe Godley (one of the ministers from our sponsoring congregation who heads up the medical mission) told me about a dream he had last night. He dreamed he was driving in his car when he suddenly spotted a mighty tornado bearing down upon him. Somehow he made it to a large building and ran inside for cover where inside he found another man right beside him also trying to escape the tornado. He ducked as the tornado passed over and when he raised himself up, he discovered that everything was gone! His car, the building, and even the man beside him was gone! As he left walking on foot, he looked up only to see another tornado bearing down upon him. He again ducked into another large building and again the same thing happened. Everything was take away by the hurricane!

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out this dream. With all that has happened to us in the last week, it should surprise you to hear that we feel like we are having to dodge tornados (Satan's efforts to disrupt our efforts). But, the true lesson to be learned from all this that, despite whatever Satan throws at us, we are still here! Satan's darts and tornados have not destroyed us. God has protected us and will provide what we need. We must, therefore, not give up (preserve) and march forward in faith that God will provide. I am also comforted by the fact that Satan must see what we are doing to be a serious threat to the kingdom of Satan here in Zambia. If he did not, then, why would he throw everything at us like this? This does not mean, however, that we will escape uninjured without brushes and scares. I must confess that a few minutes ago when I saw the wrecked bus drive into the yard, the first thing I thought of was "How much money is this going to cost us?" Neither we nor the bus owner has insurance (costs far too much in Zambia). I am quite confident that it will be our responsibility to repair the damages to this bus. So, this will be painful.

We must not forget that we are engaged in a war – a spiritual battle – and no one ever goes to war without experiencing casualties and hardship. But, it is faith that strengthens us to march forward, knowing that God will provide.

One bit of good news before I send this email. We did finally get our container cleared through customs and delivered (see below). We were getting quite worried that it would not arrive in time for the Medical Mission, for inside were many things that we needed for the Medical Mission (e.g., eyeglasses, Bibles, tents, sleeping bags, lanterns, medical supplies and equipment, etc). There were many delays over the past month. Because of the high cost of fuel, the truck drivers in Tanzania went on strike and refused to transport goods from the Tanzania port to Zambia. But, at the last minute, some special arrangements were made and the container was delivered (just two days ago). Truly, God does provide (although it often requires faith and great perseverance on our part)! The kingdom of God will defeat the kingdom of Satan. This we know.

