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*“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks;
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” 1 Thess. 5:16-18*

4 Things I Learned from ITMI Partners

by Steve Lee

On a recent trip to Southern Africa with Director **Steve Evers** and ITMI board member **Jon Dekkers**, I learned some very important things about missionaries, things which will help me appreciate them forevermore.

temporary living quarters. They cook meat on a barbecue or an open fire, they make oatmeal and maize in cast iron pots in the front yard. They split wood for cooking, repair their own vehicles, use a generator to produce

Kelly and Cherise Smith have a 100-acre farm near Durban, South Africa, where they have planted hundreds of fruit trees, refurbished the crumbling farm house and built four roundavels for fellow missionaries, a

“Like many missionary families, they home school their children, doctor their own pets, kill cobras and minister sacrificially to their friends and neighbors.”

1. Work Hard

“Being a missionary is hard, physical work,” said **Johan Leach**. He knows, because he lost 30 pounds in the two months prior to our visit. He told me this as he gave a list of projects to his workers for the day. Johan and his wife Leslie came to Chavuma, a small village on the Zambezi River in northwestern Zambia, several years ago to minister to the Luvale people. It is literally the end of the road. The only way out to the north and west are sand tracks barely wide enough for a four-wheel drive vehicle. Like modern American pioneers of the 1800s, or equivalent Dutch South African voortrekkers, they are carving a home out of the wilderness.

The Leachs brought everything they own to Chavuma and built a garage as

limited electricity and boil river water to drink. Johan rebuilt a local bridge so villagers could get to town and buy staple foods. He recently shot a crocodile so his hired man could safely fetch water from the river. The Leach’s goal is to send multiple teams west of Chavuma, in teams of two missionaries per canoe.

Tim and Ashley Keller built their own house and property walls, planted their own garden and fruit trees at their home in Kabwe, Zambia. Like many missionary families, they home school their children, doctor their own pets, kill cobras and minister sacrificially to their friends and neighbors. Tim delivers loads of books and Bibles to schools and people who can use them. He also trains native pastors and makes influential contacts with police departments, schools and churches.

local pastor, a farm worker and the mother of the their adopted Zulu girls, who all live at Seven Rivers Farm. As soon as God provides, they plan to build an entire children’s village for Zulu orphans. HIVAIDS related death is so prevalent in KwaZulu-Natal that at one time Kelly even built caskets for needy locals.

Gerhard and Elmane le Roux run a farm in the desert of northern South Africa, where survive by raising goats and sheep, chickens, dozens of acres of lucerne (hay), fruit trees, vegetables and grapes. When he’s not on the farm, Gerhard is on a church elder board in Pofadder, some 30 miles away, working to build up the pastor and his assembly. He is also on the local police, education and water boards, influencing policy to better the lives of local villagers. He also has helped

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clean the local irrigation canal and taught local people to garden so they can feed themselves. Elmane and the older children also have children's ministry, schoolwork and farm chores.

2. Overcome

Most missionaries deal with physical ailments or loneliness. Sometimes both. Some have intestinal or physiological problems. Others have a sick spouse or children who need special care or surgery. They carry on anyway.

They rarely get a vacation. One couple recently took a vacation for the first time in 13 years. When they do finally visit their home country, it becomes a grinding mix of travel, deputation, public speaking and just plain old work. They must re-adapt to once familiar food and a culture they have long since let go. Sleeping in a strange bed isn't restful, either. Therefore, a week with nothing to do, no phones to answer, a chance to play with their own children and appreciate wife or husband, is the purest blessing of God. Oh, the joys of having a conversation over a really good cup of coffee or favorite tea, without having to translate everything that is said!

Pioneering a missionary work can be lonely also. Missionary wives are almost invisible in this respect. Always there, always working, they crave genuine fellowship with other women, their grown children, and time with their busy husbands. The children want to visit other places and have friends visit, too. Sometimes Youth Group is the only fellowship they get with other youth their own age. On more than one occasion we



John Leach, missionary in Chavama, Zambia.



Cherise Smith and ministry co-worker, Angel laugh joyfully.



Tim Keller is a mature Christian who knows a sense of humor buoys up those around him.



Sober and hard-working Gerhard le Roux taught locals to garden.



Steve Lee, Steve Evers and Jon Dekkers with "Uncle Bob" local missionary of 62 years.

witnessed tears, male and female, young and old, when we left. "Can't you stay just a little longer?" they asked. You may think it an imposition to visit missionaries, but we received multiple invitations to visit "anytime" with our wives. Missionary children were quick to add, "and bring your children."

3. Laugh and Be Joyful

But they are far from sad people. ITMI missionary partners and friends have a tremendous sense of humor. From the minute we landed in Lusaka, Zambia, I knew these missionaries would be fun. Tim Keller laughed and teased everywhere we went. He has a serious side, but it is always mixed with joy and hopefulness. For example, while we were discussing the rampant disease and death so common in Africa, Tim explained the "missionary wave goodbye," which is to rub one's hands together while working in a squirt of hand sanitizer. He is a mature Christian and knows a sense of humor buoys up those around him and takes the edge off when discussing serious ministry topics or traveling long distances.

Gerhard le Roux, of Onseepkans Mission in Northern Cape state of South Africa, is a sober and hard-working man. With his gentle wife, Elmane, and their eight wonderful children, they minister to everyone who comes by the farm. That's why it is so funny when he pops off with a mischievous crack like, "this is my daughter, the one we have so much trouble with."

Charl Van Wyk, of Cape Town, teases his lovely wife Sonja regarding her duties about the home, saying "I'm

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From the Director

Dear Team,

As 2016 begins, a theme in the stories I'm getting from the field of late is that God knows and sees everything...He is important, He is listening and He is ahead of us. As John Piper says, "God is always doing 10,000 things and usually we are aware of only 3-4 of them."

It has been reported that the 12 million people living in Chennai, India have experienced a "100 year rain" and proportionate flooding.

Unfortunately a vast number of them have substandard living situations. Paul's parents' community is home to about 100,000 to 150,000 people who have built on top of a drained lake, now filled in by rubble and debris. Paul tells us that standing sewage is overflowing. Waist high water must be waded through in some places.

Food is very scarce, but with a big smile, Paul shares that the unsaved from all caste levels come into their church's humble grocery store and sheepishly tell of needing to pay for food for their family, but bank access is blocked by flooding. They ask if this new grocery store would allow them to take some food now and pay later. Imagine my surprise when Paul tells me that they have not had one person stiff them for the money they owe.

Imagine the joy of those who are unable to get out in the flooding when they see the kind servant employees of the grocery store - many of them widows who can't find other jobs - come wading through the deep and dirty water with a smile and food supplies safely on their heads!

God knew beforehand that flooding would provide an impactful way of doing ministry and He is using this newly started Christian-run ministry store in a big way. (Readers may remember the store was Paul and Molly's way of providing jobs for widows who can't get hired elsewhere.)

Jahim Buli is our young church planter in Juba, South Sudan. With all the challenges of personally taking in additional orphans, leading a new congregation of young Christians, serving widows and orphans displaced by political unrest, and his passion to train church leaders with the S.A.L.T. material, he needed to get away and be alone with God.

So, in December for a few days, he holed up in Kampala, Uganda to seek God's direction for 2016. While he was in Uganda, the currency in South Sudan was reduced in value by their government by 5x, yet the real cost of necessities stayed many times higher. This is especially devastating for those who can already barely afford what they need.

Imagine our excitement last month when a donor from Nebraska contacted ITMI and among other things, wanted to help many of our projects afford to do special Christmas outreaches. Jahim was one of the key recipients of these special funds and he felt led to bless refugee orphans with a Christmas celebration. Initially we were quite disappointed that the funds would be deeply devalued due to the new unfavorable exchange rate.

God allowed Jahim to be in Uganda where he could get actual U.S. dollars and convert them at a much better exchange rate allowing the funds to buy almost *8 times as much as if he had still been in his own country!*

God knew beforehand that this donor was going to have a special donation and that Jahim needed to be in Uganda to get the best exchange rate so that more orphan children would know God's love and care during a difficult Christmas season.

Speaking of the SALT material, we are very excited to share that the translating of SALT discipleship/counseling material translation into Arabic is progressing along at an excellent pace. We have now three of the seven books completed. This has been not without its challenges due to western software and certain cultural hurdles.

We have many, many stories of God's provision to those that He calls to Himself. If we will stay focused on obedience and not sacrifice (1 Samuel 15:22), God can and will direct His children to do great and mighty things. As you keep obeying, and we will keep telling you how God has used you to bring glory to Himself and His plan.

In His Service,



Lesson 1: "I Am Not God" of SALT translated to Arabic.

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going to tell your mother you're not being a good wife." Of course, it's funnier when you know she was raised by conservative Afrikaner parents who take husband and wife roles very seriously.

We met many other missionaries, friends of ITMI partners, and they had the same joy, the same sense of humor, the same faithfulness and prayerful attitude.

4. Pray Without Ceasing

Missionaries pray all the time. Everywhere we went, everything we did, everything we ate, was bathed in prayer. Not always half hour prayers, but a moment to ask for God's protection before driving down the lane. Ten seconds of gratefulness for arriving safely at our destination. "Lord, give us wisdom," was breathed before discussing important topics.

Prayer was not a singular event on Wednesday evenings, but rather the continuation of a perpetual conversation with God the Father about everything. I have rarely seen people "pray without ceasing."

Because of this prayerful attitude, an interesting demeanor resulted. There was a gentle flow to life throughout our travels with these missionaries. When something happened, they did not respond in a mercurial fashion, but in a thoughtful, steady way. As God has promised, there is a "peace that passes all understanding" and it is evident in these people.

Knowing they must utterly depend upon God for everything, the prayer lives of these ITMI missionaries have transformed them into humble, yet confident servants.

I am glad to encourage our supporters and readers with the knowledge that ITMI partners and friends are of the highest caliber. My life is richer for having met them.

And I would like to add that Steve Evers and Jon Dekkers are worthy of our readers', donors' and missionaries' trust, for they are serious about caring for ITMI missionaries (and everyone else they meet). They are scrupulous about every detail of this ministry, making sure every dollar donated goes where it is supposed to, that every person contacted is listened to with courtesy, that no need is forgotten, even if it means inconvenience or suffering on their part.



Steve Lee is a long-time friend of Steve and Darlene Evers. Steve runs a small business in Prescott, Arizona where he also serves his church as a deacon. He is passionate about missions and telling ITMI partners' stories.

On his first trip to Africa, Steve almost tipped over in a canoe on the Zambezi River and amazed his traveling partners with his ability to handle African food! With his ability to easily engage and make friends, he was a great asset to the team.

For Praise

1. Poland - The 4th edition of the New Testament has resulted in close to 1 million copies around the world.
2. Zambia - Kellers - Baby Ian may not be out of the woods yet, but God has already been seen at work in his progress.
3. S. Africa - Smiths - The many children's smiles at being included in the Project Christmas Blessing celebration.
4. Romania - Casa Dorca Children's Home - One of the children decided to follow Jesus. He will be baptized soon.
5. Africa/India - A generous donor's year-end gift allowed many to be showered with God's love through incredible Christmas outreaches.

For Prayer

1. India - Paul and Molly - The church will continue to demonstrate Jesus in providing relief from devastating floods.
2. S. Africa - the LeRoux - Healing from health complications and ailments from intense heat in the Onseepkans desert.
3. Poland - Tomek Jezyk - Healing for both his wife and son battling a Hepatitis virus that could cause serious damage.
4. Poland - Daniel Machlowski - For Daniel's new partnership with Campus Crusade to reach many for Christ.
5. South Sudan - Jahim - As the South Sudan economy continues to deteriorate, leaving families unable to buy daily food, pray for safety and wisdom as he continues to pastor and minister to refugees.



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