

*You shall love the LORD your God with all
your heart and
with all your soul and with all your might.
(Deu 6:5)*

Dear Prayer Partners,

Sometimes we just don't give credit to God like we should. Listen to this little story: A man was pulling into the parking lot at the grocery store, much in a hurry to get back home to watch the afternoon football game. He drove several times around the parking area looking for a parking space but could not find one. Then he said: "Lord, help me out...give me a parking space and I will go to church this Sunday and even Sunday night. All of a sudden someone pulled out of a parking space right in front of him giving him a spot. Looking up to Heaven, he said: "Never mind Lord, I found one."

Now this was just a joke I heard or read some time back but when I think about it, I know I have been guilty of this very thing. There have been times in my earlier walk with God where I promised God if He would only do this or that, then I would clean up my act or whatever it was at that time. And then I would conveniently forget my part of the bargain. Well, since I have learned not to bargain with God but just trust Him no matter what is happening at the time. I have also learned to promise God only my love, my life and my best because I am but flesh and bone and while I mean well, failure comes so easy sometimes. I say all this to make this point.....God is faithful even when we are not! His faithfulness does not depend on our faithfulness or our lack of it. Nor does His faithfulness sway or falter because ours does. No, our God is a faithful covenant keeping God, always just and always operating from a perspective of love for our good, even in judgment and discipline. Now that's enough to make a person shout hallelujah!

We returned this past week to visit our villages in the mountains and to attend the funeral of a 12 yr. old girl who was the granddaughter of our dear

friend Chief Sekyonella (many of you know him from previous visits on mission here). So it was a time of joy and sorrow. Joy because it was great being with our villages again but sorrowful because of the death of this young girl. This funeral was like none we have ever attended before since coming to Africa. There was a band, uniforms, and many churches represented. Alan represented the Baptists and spoke next to the last speaker. So the gospel got out there at least once for those who were listening. We are not sure of the cause of death...it is like all the rest...they just got sick, became thin and died. Funerals are often different yet the flow and order is always the same. Everything is ordered according to the ancestors so as not to offend any of them...the path to the cemetery (which is usually just in the middle of a field) is marked by a pile of stones showing the correct path to walk to the grave site. There is usually a sangoma (witch doctor) present to ensure everything is followed according to the way of the balimo (dead ancestors). Every detail of the event has an order and process...even who puts the first shovel of dirt on the coffin and everything is done to the appeasement of the balimo. Interestingly enough, every clan has a "clan demon" who directs and advises the sangoma and the sangoma in turn instructs the people. While the chief proclaims his faith as a Christian (and we believe he is), there is much he still does not understand and because he is a chief, he is also the protector of the ancestors whether he believes in them or not. His position of chief binds him to follow political and religious protocol. **Pray for the family of this young girl as they silently grieve in the coming days. Pray for Chief Sekonyella and his family that they would not allow tradition to deceive and direct their paths. Pray for all people everywhere who are caught in the bondage of tradition over substance.** We must not be fooled...tradition holds people everywhere in bondage because of deception by the evil one to believe a lie that tradition must be followed regardless of whether it follows scripture or makes sense....it happens here in Africa and right there where you are too. I think most of us have had circumstances where conflict arose over a pastor wanting to schedule an evangelical event at a time that was traditionally the annual church homecoming. Are we so rigid that we cannot change or make ourselves flexible for something of substance over tradition? And what about our own cultural traditions and celebrations? I don't know but it seems that the longer we are here the harder it is to distinguish between the

practices of us and them. ...they are just different traditions and gods and yet sometimes they are the same. Our own culture also practices ancestor worship of another form...we blame our parents and grandparents for why we are what we are. Sort of like they have defined us or maybe it is just easy to blame someone else for our own mistakes. Isn't that a form of ancestor worship in a sense? Aren't there times we give our dead beloved ancestors power in our lives, deceived by thinking that they have influence and control in our lives even after they have long gone from this earth? Perhaps an exaggeration but perhaps not. Something to think about maybe.

On this last trip to the mountains, we enjoyed our mountain Basotho and also the fellowship of team family Floras. We are both expecting teams at the same time. Their team will be evangelical using health classes as a means to share the gospel. They will teach hygiene, nutrition and preventive medicine. Our team is led by our oldest son Alan, Jr., and will be accompanied by his fiancé Andria, and friends Chad and Charissa. Their focus will be on evangelism, discipling, Bible distribution and meeting some of their physical needs as well through seed and vitamin ministries. **Pray for the Floras who long to serve in Mokhotlong where they have been called. They currently are waiting for land to be acquired so they can build their home. Please pray that God provides and meets all their needs. Please pray for them as they do these classes that as they touch the physical need and teach God's goodness and salvation, God will touch their spiritual need. Pray also for our team as they make preparations to come and minister to the mountain Basotho. Pray that God will speak to all of us and make His will known to us. Pray for safety as both teams travel the mountain roads.**

While our team is here, we will also have a wedding ceremony for our son and Andria. It will be an African ceremony of course with a feast to follow. This team is special to us because we will have our son and new daughter sharing our love for missions with us. Chief Sekonyella calls us the Pioneers of the mountains but each team who comes and works beside us are the true Pioneers. Alan's team has worked hard to get here and have made great ministry plans with the help of several supporting churches and private donors. To all of you who supported this team and who have a heart for the

lost, we thank you. Thank you for being a part of what this team is doing even before they touch the African soil. **Please be praying for this team as they make final preparations to come and as they work and minister to the Basotho of the Maluti Mountains.**

We have begun the goat project (First Fruits) in that we now have a stock trailer for transporting the goats to and from the mountains to the selected HIV+ mothers and widows with small children. Our next step is to build a new pen and improve on existing ones that will house separately the does and the buck here in Ficksburg. Once we have completed the holding pens, we will begin to purchase the goats and additional supplies needed. **Pray for us and the Flora family that is working with us on the First Fruit Project as we work together to reach the mountain Basotho with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Pray for the recipients of goats that they will be responsible and accountable in their care and maintenance of the goats. Most importantly, pray that they will know the true First Fruit of the Master.**

We have a praise to report! In our last update we mentioned our desire to place “Proclaimers” strategically in villages where we are working. The “Proclaimers” are like recorders that operate on solar, wind up or electricity that have the New Testament in Sesotho recorded on them. Our son has reported that they are now in receipt of six of these “Proclaimers” from the First Baptist Church in Rockledge, Florida (Pastor Greg Art and his mission minded congregation) and our son’s team, a total of 12 “Proclaimers” have been acquired and will be placed strategically in 12 mountain villages. Our many thanks to all of you.

Our plan for this past weekend was to hold a meeting with our team cluster leader, Daren Davis, and our team in Mokhotlong to discuss strategy and housing issues for the Floras in their place of service. The plan was to camp in the village where they will be living. Preparations were made and camping gear loaded and we left Katse Village headed for Mokhotlong. Not far down the mountain, the clutch failed on the Flora’s truck. Having no clutch going up and down mountains as steep as these can be is risky at best but Jim managed to float between first and second gears and eventually everyone arrived in Ficksburg and we enjoyed their company in our home

until repairs were completed. The plan for Mokhotlong was cancelled of course and while we were all disappointed, we know nothing happens by chance and God's timing and plan for us is perfect. The happy side of this was that we had two great days of fellowship with the Floras and our other team family, the Peppers, also visited so it was a nice time together with fellow missionaries for a while.

Since several on the team had birthdays all within a day of each other, we celebrated together. Our birthday people were Mohau turning 8 yrs, Sefiri turning 33, and Teresa turning...well, she refused to say but thought we heard her mumble softly 29! 😊



Still half moved in to the new house....but, a birthday party is a happy time.

We returned to the dump. Babs had prepared juice and cakes which they seemed to really appreciate. However, once they had finished, they quickly returned to their work of searching through the rubbish for a treasure of something of value and use. The children colored as I set up the "Proclaimer" and it began in Matthew. It was turned up to full volume in

hopes that everyone could hear even though they pretended not to listen. Yesterday we drove past the dump to see one of our dump kids in distress. An older teenage boy was manhandling him and trying to steal his money from him. Alan stopped and went to help the young boy and the older boy finally let go of the child and returned to the dump. We took the boy to his home in the village. I am sorry to say that this will probably happen again as it seems to be the way of survival here for many. **Please pray that the smaller children of the dump will be protected from the older ones as they search for their treasures too. Pray that they might all know the real treasure that only God can place in these mortal vessels of ours.**

Again, we close our update with a thank you for loving us as we know that we are often unlovable. So thanks for loving us and allowing us to love you! Blessings this week. May you sense God's presence in a unique way...unique to you because we have a very Unique God!

In His Name,

Alan, Babs, Daniel and Mohau

The Dials of the Maluti Mountains and the Western Free State of Southern Africa

www.basotho.org

www.missionteaminc.org

www.prayforthebasotho.org