

Nineteen days  
on the road  
with God  
(and my wife)

*a journey of faith, growth, and discovery*

Greg Pusateri

After eleven years of missionary travel, I decided to try something I've never done, journaling my daily activities. Born out of a desire to share the stories with others who are interested in what we do but may never get an opportunity to participate, I figured there was no time like the present.

I appreciate your interest in taking the time to read the journal and hope that somehow you will be blessed by it. Please give me liberty and grace in the area of grammar and linguistic precision. That's not my priority in this exercise.

All of the photos were part of the journey and coincide with the daily experiences.

I want to thank my wife for being a great traveling partner and for pushing me in regards to my writing skills. You are a big encouragement.

Thanks will always go to God who has called me, empowered me, abundantly provided for me, and given me numerous opportunities to preach and teach His Word to the nations of the world.

Blessings, Greg



## DAY ONE

### *At The Gate*

November 25<sup>th</sup>, 11:55 AM  
Mood: chillin'

The past hour or so I have been going through the usual process of separating myself from my everyday responsibilities in order to mentally, spiritually, and emotionally prepare for the next two and a half weeks. In an attempt to prove to my wife that I have all things under control I repress any nagging compulsions to recheck the already locked doors, say goodbye again to my already depressed dog, and do yet one more run-through in my mind of what I think we might need for the journey ahead. I calmly make the decision and exclaim, "Ready or not, we're out of here," as we jump in the van and go.

I'm overwhelmed with a sense of God's sovereignty in my life. I always get this way before embarking on a long trip. Maybe it is because I will have to trust at a level beyond my daily requirement as I avail myself to new situations that would be considered anything but "normal" to my routine. He, knowing everything concerning us from beginning to end - and we, endeavoring to walk in trust, discovering as we go, those mysteries that would remain unknown to us had we never ventured out in faith. Some undisciplined desire drives me to push the limits to once again prove what I believe is true.

My goal for the next two day plane trip is to read "The Shack." Why? Maybe because a good friend placed a copy in

my hand and highly suggested it, never hinting to the story line, even in the face of my persistence. Maybe because my wife grabbed it first and devoured it like the voracious reader that she is and subsequently also suggested I have a turn at it - also resisting my inquiry to the gist of the contents and ending any further insistence with, "you'll just have to read it for yourself." Maybe it's part of the whole sovereign design thing and "You-know who" has put it on my heart and is Himself suggesting it's what I need for the season. Maybe somewhere in the contents I will discover something that will prove useful in the days to come. All I know is that in the next few minutes I will be joining about two hundred others in a giant aluminum tube that will be propelled over five hundred miles-per-hour at thirty-five thousand feet above the surface of the earth for the next seventeen hours. What better place to meet with God than suspended between heaven and earth? Suspended would be a debatable term, but if I really want to make it to my destination in Nairobi I have no other choice but to submit. The task of reading will advantageously serve as a useful tool in the separation process.

A well dressed elderly woman sits down across from my wife who is seated next to me and begins to spill out a recap of the past forty years of her life. Here we go again. Annette has a gift, if you want to look at it that way. There is an incredible sense about her that just makes people, including complete strangers, comfortable and at ease. Within minutes they will be regurgitating both the thick and the thin of their life stories and the various issues they are presently struggling with. She'll provide the same look of acceptance with the usual "uh-huh" and "hmm" with a possible "oh" and possibly even a "wow." Within a short space of time they will begin to look relieved as they both part with big smiles and an uncanny feeling of accomplishment. Like I said, it's a gift.



1PM - mood: introspective

I'm struck by the self-less sacrifice of the Multnomah Indian princess. (I refuse to elaborate, you will just have to read the book for yourself.) No coercion, no peer-pressure, only total sacrifice. If it's not true, it's just a nice story of how someone took upon

themselves the burden that had to be borne so that others could live. If it's true, it requires us to look within and ask the unsettling questions that reveal our motives that drive the decisions that define our lives. Selah.

3PM - mood: Sleep deprived and hungry.

I'm feelin' a little crazy. Over time I have come to refer to it as the ADHD rush. Usually, it is accompanied with a spontaneous download of insight, revelation, creativity, and just plain foolishness.

Just popped in to Chili's for something to eat. No telling what might happen in here. Got a sudden surge of inspiration and thru down this rap..



*"My life would be a waste if it wasn't for grace,  
I'd just be takin' up space, but now I can run the race,  
Till I see His face..."*



Maybe someone who reads this can finish it for me. Annette is not sure if she wants to be seen with me right now.

(From page 61 of "The Shack") I learned a cool, new word:

<p><u>Suprarationality</u>      Reason beyond the normal definitions of fact or data-based logic</p> <p>Something that only makes sense if you can see a bigger picture of reality</p> <p>Faith (my definition)</p>
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6PM "Out the Gate" - mood: tense

"We'll be departing on time and should actually be arriving in Amsterdam early," was the last statement we heard from the flight captain. That was over an hour ago. We are all on board, engines revved, ready to go, but still sitting at the gate. It seems one of the flight attendants heard something strange and reported an abnormal sound that is now being investigated by a mechanical crew. Lucky for me I have my book, and boy am I into it.

It's interesting how people deal with delays. The old sheik man with a black turban around his head sitting next to me has been chanting in Hindi for the past thirty minutes and is now in some sort of a trance state of consciousness. It's pretty weird, because like I said, he's sitting next to me. I'm not overly excited about the delay myself, but hey, I'm not going to freak out everyone else on the plane either. My first thought is to start praying in tongues out loud just to see what might happen. I suppress my attitude and instead do it quietly under my breath.

The sixteen month old boy seated directly behind him has been incessantly screaming for over an hour. That was right about the time we received the wonderful news from the captain concerning the early arrival, which now was nothing more than an empty promise. Good thing we don't have a tight connection. The boy's father decides it might be a good idea to stuff some kind of cereal in the kid's mouth in an attempt to shut him up. The young lad promptly nullifies the father's feeble decision by gurgling and choking through the scream. Now we have an out of control,

screaming kid with projectile vomit dispersing over the seats while chanting man is enjoying ethereal visions of Buddha and multiple conversations with whoever he's talking to right now.

It's getting hot in here. I have a splitting headache. I'm forcing myself to laugh so I don't get upset. I'm totally creeped out by the dude next to me so I raise the volume some on my praying. I want to stay humble but feel kind of like Elijah when he challenged the priests of Baal by saying let's see who's God is bigger. My need to be in control is increasingly welling up inside of me and insisting that I take charge of the situation.

What's that? The plane is moving! "Looks like we are being cleared for take-off," says the captain. I'm wondering if I should get my hopes up and buy into what is already a mistrustful relationship with someone in whom I have placed my life but cannot see and don't really believe. Oh, ye of little faith...

Like a deep breath, the good news has had a calming affect on the now stressed travelers. Almost immediately the little boy has stopped crying and the sheik is now sitting back reading a newspaper. As we plow down the runway and lift off up into the air, people begin to talk to each other. We are on our way once again.



## DAY TWO

### *The Approach*

11:30AM or now 7:30AM Amsterdam time - mood: fried

My head hurts, my eyes are burning, my ears are ringing, my face is greasy, my feet are swollen, and my body is cold, and I'm really uncomfortable. I still have a slight after taste of soap in my mouth from an unfortunate incident in the dark a few hours ago when I attempted to brush my teeth and found out that what I thought was toothpaste was actually shave cream in a tube. Yuck.

Crying boy is back to his old ways again and thoroughly embarrassing mom and dad right now. Chanting man is enjoying some fruit. Looks like it is going to be a great day! I'm looking forward to the next lap.

10:30AM "Lap Three" - mood: subdued

You can't effectively minister to people that you don't love. I've known missionaries who actually despised the people they were called to. Their ministry never appeared to bear any lasting fruit. Today, they are no longer involved in what they used to view as a call from God.

Part of the Kenyan marathon team is getting seated in front of me. On their way back home from a competition in Suriname, they clear a way in one of the overhead bins to store a huge three foot trophy for safe travel back to

their country. I guess that's what you call "bringing home the gold." Kenyan runners are the best in the world.

Please forgive my analytical predisposition as I list a few things I am gleaning from "The Shack" I don't trust my memory to retain it all and there is way too much to try to assimilate at one time.

God is not always who we think He is.

He invites us to visit the place of our pain.

When all we can see is our pain, we can't see Him.

God's presence will change the atmosphere.

Did God really forsake Jesus or did Jesus just "feel" forsaken?

Living unloved is like clipping a bird's wings and removing his ability to fly.

- Pain has a way of clipping our wings.
- Pain, if left unresolved can make you forget that you were created to fly.

Love always leaves a significant mark.

A bird, whose nature it is to fly but only chooses to walk, doesn't stop being a bird, but his life experience has been significantly altered.

The Word created all things before He became flesh. After He became flesh, He could experience as flesh what He created as the Word.

4:30PM "Cruising Altitude" - mood: tired, overwhelmed, blown away

I don't really want to talk right now because I am completely exhausted and thoroughly blown away by the revelations of love expressed in "The Shack." Somehow God will help me grasp what is happening.

Trust is the fruit of a relationship in which you know you are loved.

In four hours we will be landing in Nairobi.

## DAY THREE

### *The Road to the Bush*

6AM - mood: rested

I woke up to these three words; Learn, Love, Lend. I feel like it is a directive for the days ahead.

More meat from "The Shack:"

Rights are where survivors go so that they won't have to work out relationships.

When God is our life, submission will be the most natural expression of our character and nature within relationships.

Submission is a "sharing of life."

As a result of the fall, woman turned from God to man, and man turned to himself and his achievements.

Love is the skin of knowing. In relationships, love cannot grow unless knowing grows.

Those who know God are free to live and love without an agenda.

Lies are fortresses we run to so we can feel safe and powerful.

Fears and lies are "fig leaves" that we hide behind to keep ourselves from being known.

Guilt will never help us find freedom in God.

All evil flows from independence and independence is a choice.

Paradigms power perceptions and perceptions power emotions.

- Most emotions are responses to perception – what you think is true about a given situation.
- If your perception is false, then your emotional response to it will be false too.
- Just because you believe something firmly doesn't make it true.
- Be willing to reexamine what you believe.



We barter with some farmer women on the highway as we stop to buy a bunch of produce for the house. It's really cheap here as most of the people who farm just drag their stuff to the highway and sell it on the side of the road.

We grab some roasted corn and head out in hopes of reaching Webuye before dark.



## DAY FOUR

### *New Discoveries*

6AM - mood: disoriented, but trusting God at a new level

After five previous visits to African countries, the shock and awe of some of the things you don't see in the West does not have the impact that it originally had during the initial experience. Everything is different this time. Expectations, desires, motives, wants, etc. Maybe it is a cleansing of personal ambitions but for sure I am in the middle of a new paradigm shift. I feel like the whole thing about wanting to read *The Shack* was a set-up by God and that I couldn't really engage in the ministry here until I had completed processing some things that I gleaned through the story.



I can hear the girls in the other room singing to Annette before they head off to school. We arrived last night to find seven of them living in the house now. Each one has encountered great difficulty in their young life, being left parentless and without any other family members to adequately care for them - a veritable death sentence in this part of the world. However, through

some sovereign (there I go with that word again) design found their way into our lives where hopefully a new lease on their own life can be realized somehow. It is a great joy to be with them. The two newest, Eunice and Gracie, are seeing and meeting muzungu's (white people) for the first time. They cautiously touch our skin and stroke our hair as if we are some mysterious creatures from another world. There is an initial sense of apprehension as they slowly come closer to satisfy the childlike desire to learn something from this new experience.

12 noon

Many of the churches here are divided and there is much envy and strife among the leadership. We knew there were some big relationship problems among the pastors and leaders here, but not to this extent. Recent e-mail correspondence tipped us off but we resolved to not get involved until we could be here in person.

I'm still going through some of my own inner unsettledness as I grapple with the revelations that have impacted me through the book and now it appears that I will involuntarily have to assume the role of intermediary and peace-maker in what I am realizing is a great division. I am praying and believing that there will be a time of reconciliation and re-establishment of trust. It is definitely a great opportunity to watch God move. So, I pray and listen and intend to obey...

10PM - mood: fatigued

I preached three services today. The heavens opened during tonight's revival service and a mighty breakthrough took place. The pastor even mentioned that he discerned many people were receiving healing of discouragement and depression. As we drove away we could hear them singing, dancing, and rejoicing.



## DAY FIVE

### *In the Flow*

6AM mood: rested and ready

I finally got a full night's sleep after four long days. Once fatigue sets in nature takes its course and the result is inevitable. You have no choice but to shut down. Many times when traveling I actually look forward to that moment when your eyes are burning and you just cannot hold them open any longer, and the thief that has evaded you has now come upon you like an armed man. Time to submit.

We woke up to sounds of the girls playing outside our window. Maybe that was their contrived conspiracy to subtly arouse us so that they could continue to have their way with us. In the short span of time that we have been here I'm amazed at how we are getting attached to them and them to us, and the demonstration of affection they are reciprocating with. As a society, Kenyans are not openly demonstrative, but I guess given the situation for what it is, and the depth of rejection they have dealt with in their short lives, they will quickly respond to any sign of love. It's ok by me.

We found out yesterday that the newest girl, Gracie, was just dropped off and deserted by her mother. She has a hollow look in her eyes, and I want to pick her up and hug her. She is still at the periphery of the "circle of love" but is progressively coming in closer.

8AM - mood: victorious and overcoming!

I just smashed a mosquito against the wall with my Bible. Revenge at last! An appropriate payback for the incessant buzzing around my head the past few nights.

Speaking of Bibles, I opened my bag only to realize that the Bible that was in the case was not the one I always bring on ministry trips. Someone inadvertently picked mine up at church and instead, there was my spare. Hmm, no notes, no handy references, no emergency sermons, just trust at a new level...

I passed The Shack to my driver, Martin. He's a great guy who runs a safari service out of Nairobi and over the years has become a trusted personal friend. We can talk about horticulture, politics, wildlife, philosophy, and God. I'm curious to see what happens to him when he reads the book.

9AM - mood: feeling loved in major way

There is a greasy spot on my shirt where one of the girls has been laying her head for the past twenty minutes. Dianna doesn't even know me but has melted into my lap. I guess love has a way of getting its needs met whether moral, healthy, or not. I've heard it said that words are one of the lowest forms of communication. Verbally, she does not understand me, nor do I understand her, so we just exchange glances and smile at each other as she lays her head back down and absorbs what she needs most but may never have had. It's been a heck of a conversation.

We pack into the crowded van and head for the market in Butere to find some small backpacks for the girls who at this point could care less about a book bag --- they're ecstatic with the thought of just going for a ride!

On the way home we stop and haggle with some guy who is selling chickens on the side of the road. Since the post-election tribal clashes earlier this year, food and everything else has inflated significantly. Everyone is doing whatever they can to survive. Even the news stations are reporting a shortage of certain things until the transportation services can resume to their normal operations.



We settle for KSH 1350 (approximately 15.00 US bucks) for three, and we are on our way. Nette goes to the school and I head for the meeting at the church where everyone is waiting for me.

9:30PM

The cool night air was refreshing as we drove down the narrow trail that led from the mud-walled church towards the highway. The temperature in the service was stifling, and the dust from the dung covered floor was sticking to my sweat. We could hear the saints shouting, singing, and dancing with great joy and lifted hearts. Another night of breakthrough as Jesus moved with power among His people, reaffirming the message of His word with signs following. This is the third service of the day and I am spent.

10:30PM

I humbly thanked God for what He had accomplished today as I replayed some of the faces of those I was praying for earlier. He is definitely using our time here to heal many wounds.

I brushed the cockroach off my pillow as I laid my head down for some much deserved sleep. Thoughts of what God would do tomorrow filled my head and heart with expectation. Give us this day our daily bread..



Dianna



Charlyne



Naomi



Eunice



Susan



Grace



Dolphin

## DAY SIX

### *Ordinations*

8AM - mood: groggy

I'm on a roll this morning. My hands are splattered with blood stains (although I'm not really sure who blood it is) as I walk around the room killing mosquitoes. I was wondering why they were so much easier to catch today, but I guess that they are just looking for a place to settle down after a long night of draining the life out of who knows who?

12PM

It is Sunday morning and there is much excitement at the church. Today I will be ordaining four pastors into the ministry.

The four candidates and their wives were seated together on some small benches on the front row of the roofless brick structure. Several wind-torn tarps had been stretched out above and were supported by limbs and timbers to shade the congregation from the intensity of the sun. Everyone was more concerned about finding a seat in the shade than the rag-tag appearance of the incomplete, meager surroundings. They had been drawn to the event, not a grandiose ivory towered structure.

Over four hundred people have turned out for this special occasion. One of the candidates, Yohanna, had been estranged from his father for a number of years. Earlier this year his two year old daughter died. Lately, things

had been quite difficult for he and his wife. He was elated when he looked up and saw his father walking into the church.

After the service, and much to everyone's amazement, Yohanna's father quickly made his way to the front, proudly picked up his son and carried him around the church.

Sounds like restoration to me!



2PM - mood: fulfilled

Some of the women fried Nette and I a whole chicken for lunch. I got the gizzard which is usually reserved for special guests.

Don't let Nette try to convince you that she doesn't eat meat. Possession is nine-tenths of the law and here is the evidence!

## DAY SEVEN

### *Retrospection*

Mood: feeling the presence of the Holy Spirit in a deep way.

There is a real deep stirring within me which indicates God will be moving in a significantly strong way this morning. My complete focus is on Him and what He wants to accomplish in the meeting.

I'm actually writing this entry on day eight due to the hectic schedule and other stuff that has taken precedence.

We arrived at the church at 9:30AM because the service was scheduled to begin at 10. As usual there was no one else there (except for a few small children who are always ready to offer you a subdued greeting), including the pastor. As I rouse him on the phone he apologetically repents for his lack of diligence. When he arrives a few minutes later, his embarrassment begins to spill over onto the other workers who are beginning to arrive with various pieces of equipment.

12 noon - mood: wondering how God is going to bless such chaos

Things are finally getting cranked up. Several guys pull up on bicycles hauling the sound system, keyboards and a generator! Bicycles ("bota-bota" in the local lingo) are the most economical and common form of transport service.

I've seen them hauling everything from people, to 90-kilo sacks of potatoes, firewood, caskets, and even one guy with a stack of five cases of soda! Don't ask me how they balance, I guess it just comes with time and practice. For sure they definitely push the envelope.



A fully decked-out bota-bota ready for hire.

3PM

We are 2½ hours into the service and God is moving. I preached on "the heart of a servant" after I found out that there was so much dissension and division going on between various churches and pastors. I sent Nette to secretly find a bucket of water as I sensed that this would be a great opportunity to wash feet. Let's go for broke and do it Jesus style!

Many of the pastors are weeping openly as they wash each others feet and repent. God is healing and making us one. I have to walk away for a time to gain my composure.



# DAY EIGHT

## *Mid-point*

8AM - Mood: mellow

A man I have never seen before has arrived at the house requesting prayer for his daughter who had just been hit by a car. We quickly prayed for him and he left to go to the hospital.

Looks like someone has put a new bar of soap in the shower. There are twelve of us (sometimes 13, depending on who else decides to stay over) sharing the shower and the "squat hole." I am surprised at how smoothly and effortlessly things flow as everyone defers to the other and simply waits their turn. The key is to get up early and do whatever needs to be done as quickly as possible.

9:30AM - mood: goofy

Most visiting Americans view the ubiquitous squat hole as a necessary but despised experience. Myself, I am discovering some distinct advantages of this greatly maligned object, and learning to appreciate it with a new found sense of value.

- It is a wonderful thigh-strengthening exercise.
- It greatly improves body balancing dynamics (aim, weight distribution, and proper distance from the hole which is highly critical for splatter reduction).
- It assists with time management - the duration spent there is of course determined by thigh strength.

Now, if I can just find some water to wash my hands...

10:00AM

As we wait in the Bungoma market for the women to buy some fruit, I struggle to shake the last bit of grogginess that has been hanging on to me since 6:30 this morning. Like some surreal time warp, an encroaching fog has enveloped my brain and raptured me into another world. There are clamoring sounds of people milling about and noisily opening their shops for business while truck drivers busily offload every type of product necessary for daily existence. I finish my banana and simultaneously savor the aftertaste of Stoney Tangiwizi (a spicy, ginger flavored soda - incidentally my favorite) on my tongue. Inhaling deeply, my lungs fill with warm, monoxide heavy, smoke-tinged, dusty, urine-drenched air. I'm alive and I love it. I have no clue what I will preach this morning.

We're on our way to Harambee town for another set of meetings with another group of people.

4PM - mood: drained

After preaching for about 3½ hours today, I admit that I am tired, fulfilled, elated, exhausted, and joyful. My driver, Martin has been pretty sullen for that last three days as he has become somewhat of a recluse, curled up in the seat of his van totally submerged in The Shack. It is obvious that he wants to be left alone.

6PM

Nette bought the girls some cheap, plastic school busses and they are going crazy playing with them. The youngest, Charlene, has already pulled one of the wheels off of hers. It's a mass frenzy of collisions and wreckage as they aggressively assault each other in a no holds barred, all out, Kenyan style, back yard demolition derby. It's too dark to take pictures and the mosquitoes are on the prowl, so I head for the house.

## DAY NINE

### *R & R*

7AM - mood: free...

Today we will take Betty, Magutt, and the girls to the big, local market. I have declared it a day of rest for me. No timetable, no commitments, no demands, no agenda.

8AM

My awesome wife has just provided the wonderful service of placing a large cup of steaming hot, sweet java in my tired hands. The aroma has already aroused my senses as I anticipate the moment it touches my lips and begins its ordained journey to refresh and energize my mind. I give thanks.

It wouldn't take a debate to convince me that coffee is a gift from heaven. Kenyan coffee is for sure some of the best and very close to the top of the list. In the fashion of a reputable connoisseur I sit silently in the privacy of the room and savor the delectable flavors that stimulate my senses, restore my sanity, and release energy to my bones. It feels somewhat like a religious experience.

In the distance I can hear the muffled sounds of hagglers yelling through cheap microphones and distorted speakers as they compel passer-bys to come a peruse their piles of used clothing, shoes, and other recycled goods. It's market day and if we don't move soon all of the produce will be sold out.



4PM - mood: stuffed

The sudden rain storm brought a reprieve to the sweltering heat. I had mistakenly thought that I had found a quiet spot on the front corner of the porch and from nowhere they appeared chanting, "Rain, rain, go away, come back another day!" How many times will they repeat that chorus before they get tired? A prompt exodus into the back bedroom finds the rain coming through the screenless window wetting the suitcase I placed there for a temporary footrest. Swinging the shutters closed I'm convinced that the situation justifies a great excuse for a nap.

5PM

Nette is in the kitchen learning how to cook chapatti.

The continuous pounding of the raindrops on the tin roof has lulled me into a state of semi-consciousness.

"Ministry is simply the fruit of growing in Christ-likeness." Excerpt from "The Final Quest" (by Rick Joyner).

6PM

Magutt has invited me to join him for this week's edition WWE professional wrestling. He anxiously awaits the appearance of John Sena (his favorite character) for his bout with Batista. The tension in the room mounts and a vigorous debate ensues as to whether or not it is real. I guess some things are consistent wherever you go...

## DAY TEN

### *Climbing the Mountain*

8AM - mood: somber

Today we are heading up to Mt. Elgon. It will be our third visit to the interior of this place in as many years. Recent uprisings have brought great suffering upon the Saboat people who have pioneered homesteads here.

During the past few years, rebels have murdered many residents and driven thousands of others into IDP's (internal displacement camps). Homes and churches have been burned. Presently, there is peace as the army has come and either killed or expelled the rebels cross the border into Uganda. We begin the morning by visiting one of the few churches that remain and listen to the stories of how some were miraculously spared from the violence.

We felt it appropriate to pray and prophesy a new day of restoration in the land, and that God was turning a season of mourning and grief into a season of joy.

11AM

Hundreds of people are waiting for us as we drive up to the small rock and stick-framed church building. It is reported that there are over fifty churches represented in the meeting with several pastors coming all the way from Uganda.

4PM



My voice is almost gone. I have preached about three hours and the atmosphere in the place is electric. We have just prayed for signs, wonders, miracles and healings. The saints are energized and rejoicing as the Word raises their faith and restores to them their spiritual inheritance.

One of the bishops is declaring a new Pentecost among the churches in the mountain! I'm looking forward to tomorrow and anticipate the testimonies from what is happening today.

6PM

I have one thing on my mind as we drive up to the house in Webuye. An ice-cold Stoney Tangiwizi is a rare find as the locals prefer to drink it warm. Magutt has obviously been thinking of me because earlier he put some in the freezer so that we could imbibe when we returned. What a great way to end the day. I raise a toast and thank God for another opportunity to do this.



## DAY ELEVEN

### *Assimilated*

5AM - mood: pumped

A mile or so away one of the Islamic imams is chanting to Allah. It is the traditional religious morning routine. The mosques think that it is their responsibility to wake the entire town by blasting their voices over huge speakers as they publicly broadcast their morning prayers towards Mecca. No noise ordinances here.

9AM - mood: anticipating

My interpreter, Joseph, excitedly meets me at the van as we crest the muddy hill coming into the compound of the church grounds. He and some of the others have been up all night talking about yesterday's ministry and what it accomplished in the brethren. There is a keen awareness of spiritual things and much discussion about restoration and renewal.

12noon - mood: social

We are sitting in a mud hut enjoying some boiled eggs, chapati, bananas, rice and peas as I share a story about a man I saw on the way up the mountain today. He was sitting in the grass by the roadside eating a pile of raw meat and animal entrails. Blood was dripping off of his hands and onto his shirt. It was fun watching the women getting grossed out but the men all unenthusiastically admitted that they had seen such things before. One local guy

confessed that the raw liver was his favorite organ. The conversation eventually led to a discussion of how some of the men have lost their minds due to over consumption of alcohol.

Walking down the trail on the way back to the church we see an unconscious drunk guy laying in the grass. Unbeknownst to him, some little children are gathering around and tauntingly daring each other to see how close they can get without waking him up.

4PM - mood: serious

I spent the day with what I would refer to as "heroes of faith." A group of about fifty pastors and evangelists who live in the bush. All of them are poor and have endured many trials. Recently, one of their own was murdered by rebels. Tribal clashes and uprisings have left thousands homeless and devastated. Many are living in Red Cross IDP camps until it becomes safe enough for them to return to their farms. The ministry here left me humbled and spent. I can't wait to return.

8PM - mood: bloated

I just finished a big meal of pilau, cabbage, garam, carrots and peppers. Awesome!

Some thoughts and revelations as I read from Matthew 13:46:

You will never find the pearl if you refuse to search.

The value you place on something is revealed by the extent you will go to obtain it.

Do you value the kingdom over all other assets and possessions?

# DAY TWELVE

## *Winding Down*

10AM - mood: pondering

Tomorrow will be the last day of intensive ministry. The past eleven days have been incredible and full of adventure, surprise, and life. Both good and bad, ups and downs, positive and negative.

We are on our way to the town of Kitale to make lunch connection with a missionary we have been wanting to meet.



Life in Kenya is difficult. Women do most of the physical labor, some of them with babies strapped to their backs.

Here, a woman cultivates a field by hand with a pick mattock.

Most of the cooking is done on the ground with firewood or charcoal.





Bishop Tom Kireba, his wife Eunice, and their family at Mt. Elgon.



Divine appointments are a cool thing. God just makes a way for certain people to connect in a particular place at an ordained time to exchange something that will work together to accomplish His purposes. That basically summarizes the last two hours with our new friend, Daniel.

I reach into my backpack and extract the now tattered copy of *The Shack* and hand it to Daniel as a parting gift.

Annette on a field trip with the girls.

(L to R: Anna (standing in back), Eunice, Grace, Charlene, Naomi, Dolphin, Dianna, Susan)



## DAY THIRTEEN

### *Finishing*

6AM - mood: lazy

Here I sit in a semi-conscious stupor as I patiently await for Nette to bring me some coffee. I hope it's strong.

9AM - mood: contemplative

We are heading for the river to assist a local church with the baptism of some new converts.

It's now 11:30AM and I still can't seem to shake the fog from my head as I suck down a warm orange soda hoping that the sugar will give me a much needed lift.

12:45 mood: praising God

The cow manure and mud squished through my toes as we made our way down to the bank of the river. In the middle of a sugar cane plantation,



the saints are gathering to witness the 15 young converts being baptized. Some families across the river are wondering what's up with all the commotion and singing as

they come closer for a better look. Together we pray, laugh, cry, and rejoice. Glory, glory and more glory..



3PM - The final service  
mood: running on autopilot

Just finished preaching on Matthew 16 - "Jesus is building his church." We have ministered hard for the last eleven days and poured out as much as we had in us (and then some). It has been awesome to watch God working in the lives of His people as they responded to the preaching of the Word and the prayer time.

Pastors from other churches are beginning to congregate outside as the word spreads that we will soon be leaving. They press through to say their goodbyes promising that they will keep in touch through e-mail.

A young pastor's wife comes forward and gives me a live chicken as a gift of appreciation.



# DAY FOURTEEN

## *Transition*

7:30AM - mood: sad, but fulfilled

No one has informed the girls that we will be leaving in a few minutes. Betty Magutt, Winny, and the others are trying their best to hold back their feelings but you can see the repressed emotions on their faces. For the past twelve days we have eaten, slept, prayed, worshipped, fellowshipped and played together in a small house. It has truly been a rewarding experience.

I'm trying not to choke as I hug each girl for the last time - until we see them again. As I make my way past the kitchen I slip each of the housekeepers and the security guard a few hundred shillings for the various errands and tasks they have readily completed for us. I'm tracing back through my mind and suddenly realize that through the ministry of the children's home and school we have created nine jobs as well as providing an above-average lifestyle and accommodations for the girls. A sense of responsibility and satisfaction simultaneously fill my heart as I thank God for the opportunity to be a part of His great plan. You know, the "sovereignty" thing. The gate opens and we head out down the horribly rutted, dusty, poor excuse for a road.

8AM

We have to get through Eldoret early as the rumors have it that there will be a riot sometime today. Martin flips on the CB radio and starts scanning for a report from other drivers who are listening for the same. He plans for an alternate route around town just in case. An early start

should get us through town before there are any roadblocks or other violence. This is the same area that earlier this year was the site a many senseless killings and random acts of violence. Not far from here an entire church was torched with everyone still inside. All of the congregants perished. Along the way we see many burned-out homes and businesses. IDP camps dot the hillsides. There is still much tension among the tribal groups as further rumors report that some are just waiting for another excuse to resume the violence.

5PM

Two young leopards have just crossed the road in front of us and are now stealthily moving through the thorny underbrush. We get a short glance of their tail, back, and head as they silently slip away into the diminishing daylight.



We are in the middle of the Nakuru game preserve on our way up to the Lion Hill Lodge. Our intention was to spend a couple nights picking up some r & r before we head back home.



The cool wind is beginning to blow a rainstorm off of the eastern escarpment of the rift valley. We all agree that it's time to head back to camp for something to eat.

## DAY FIFTEEN

### *Rest*

6:30 AM mood: constipated

The early morning mist permeates the old acacia forest and provides a sense of enchanted awe and mystery. As we move slowly down the rocky road a white rhinoceros forages in some low brush near the edge of the lake. Unconcerned, but acutely aware of our presence, it slowly slips out of sight to fulfill its necessary, daily obligations.

11AM - mood: mesmerized

The pelicans, flamingoes, and storks continue their fluid movement coming and going from the lake. Each has its own unique pattern of movement. As I gaze out from my vantage point on a grassy knoll, a flock of storks ascends into the updraft created by the stony cliffs behind me. Round and round they go, effortlessly gaining altitude with each rotation.

Somewhere in the overgrowth of the hillside behind me I can hear the clamoring ruckus of a family of baboons. The most despised of all the primates, the baboon is certainly the most shameless of all. He will beg, vandalize, scavenge, desecrate, and steal without remorse.



12 noon - mood: renewed

The combination of hot water, clean clothes, five cups of coffee, soap, change of weather, and an actual toilet (an absolute luxury item that a large portion of the world's population will never experience) have together collaborated to bring refreshment to me, both body and soul. I'm alive

5:30PM - mood: playful

The deep sighs of the three young lionesses were intermittently exchanged for growls as they aggressively ripped the flesh from the unfortunate water buffalo. Raw power expressed itself as the youngest one crushed the large thigh bone with its vice-like jaws. Three others were laying in the shade, their distended stomachs revealing they had already taken their fill.



Though they appeared relaxed, they cautiously watched the approaching hyenas, who apparently wished they could join in on the deadly free for all. They would have to wait their turn.

Night encroaches as swirling hoards of insects descend upon us like an alien invasion in a science fiction movie.

## DAY SIXTEEN

### *Departure*

6AM - mood: totally adsorbed in the environment

I've had the same dream for three nights in a row. I am apprehended and subsequently mugged by a group of men. I struggle to get free but to no avail. What does it mean? I take it as a warning for the last lap of the trip.

My reading glasses fog up as the steam rises from a much coveted cup of joe. Though tropical, the temperature in the Rift Valley drops drastically at night so that by morning you will need a jacket. The forest is alive with unique avian and entomological sounds. It is a veritable bird-watchers paradise.

This morning we will head back to Niarobi to take care of some business before flying up to Amsterdam.

Martin is feeling adventurous. He knows a guy on Naivasha Lake with a motor boat. It's only 12 noon and we don't need to be at the airport in Nairobi until 8PM. I'm down with the excursion.



Charles was waiting for us with a big smile on his face. His eyes lit up when he noticed Martin pulling the old fishing rod from the back of the van. The sun was hot and bright but we could see the rain clouds building in the

distance as they gathered over the valley escarpment.

Thirty minutes and a hundred hippos later I was ready to see someone put a fish in the boat.



What was negotiated at the onset as a one hour wildlife viewing excursion has evolved into a full-fledged fishing tournament! There is something about the egos of fishermen.

Let's see, three guys who love to fish all in the same boat, one rod, limited time, one wife (mine, the unfortunate hapless victim who is now assessing the situation and wishing she was within wading distance to shore), you get the picture...

The rod tip bent sharply as Charles man-handled the modest largemouth bass into the boat and promptly placed it on the stringer. 3½ hours later the slender bow was sliding up through the swamp to the rickety dock. Charles grinned and muttered something about African time to which I immediately replied, "Hakuna matata" from my present, relaxed, prone position stretched out across the front seat. "Yah," he quietly agreed, "no problem, it's OK."



# DAY SEVENTEEN

## *Amsterdam Centre*

8AM - mood: bug-eyed

I am a pitiful sight when sleep deprived. The big sagging bags underneath the bloodshot whites are a dead giveaway.

Some people have no trouble sleeping on airplanes. I am not one of them. I am a little too tall to be able to get comfortable in a seat that is designed for someone four inches shorter. Weight-wise I am still OK, but probably very close to the limit.

Our usual strategy when returning to the States from Africa is to do it in one fell swoop, connecting somewhere in Europe. This time, on the return, we have arranged to spend a few days in Amsterdam exploring the city. It is about twenty degrees Fahrenheit on the platform as we await the train to Central Station.

"Where are you going, the rough-looking character asked as we stepped out the front door of the train station?" I hesitated to answer, only requesting him to point me to the main thoroughfare to Dam Square. (I studied the map enough and was confident that if I could locate the road then finding the hotel from there would not be difficult.) "Follow me, I'm going in that direction myself," the bum responded. What could it hurt, I thought as I looked around at all the people busily coming and going. He certainly wouldn't try anything foolish out in public. I naively told him the name of my hotel to which he responded, "I know exactly where it is." The steady rain mixed with the biting cold provided more impetus to follow the guy as it was not optimum weather to be wandering around an unfamiliar city.

"Here's the shortcut," he replied, pointing down a narrow corridor that led to who knows where. When I looked back at Annette for reassurance, her eyes screamed absolutely not! The moment I stopped, the recurring dream flashed back into my mind as I promptly told him that I preferred to walk on the sidewalk out in the open. "It all leads to the same place," he added, "and besides, it's raining and cold." Any moment, I anticipated a group of thugs jumping out from behind some garbage cans to take the little that we had.

Slowly and cautiously we made our way down a series of alleys and backstreets. "It must be my lucky day," our street guide said as he reached down to pick up a small bag of marijuana that someone had mistakenly dropped. (You can purchase it here in the taverns and coffee shops.) "I don't use it, but I know some people who do and it will sure make them happy," he advised me as if to add credibility to his seedy demeanor. Another quick glance at Annette's face said, "yeah, right." By now he realized that I was hip to his game and wanted nothing more than to get to the hotel. No conversation, no advice, no unsolicited information, just get me there, pronto.

"As you can probably tell, I'm homeless," he innocently interjected as we arrived at the door. By now I was actually starting to like the guy and had intended to flip him a few euros even before he asked. There was kind of a weird vibe in the air as his toothless grin revealed a moment of satisfaction in the accomplishment of our business transaction. I'm sure he was viewing us as a good omen knowing he could pawn the bag of weed for ten times the tip I gave him. If I discerned correctly, there appeared to be a little kick in his step as he spun around leaning on the point of his umbrella and headed back to the train station to wait for the next mark.

"Oh, this is luxurious," Annette sighed as she fell backwards in an exasperated free-fall. I don't believe I have ever felt a bed this soft. She scurried under the covers and muttered something about seeing me in a few hours.

I balanced the remote in my hand for the first time in eighteen days and felt it an appropriate moment to sit back and catch up on what has been happening in the world over the past few weeks. It would be the beginning of my re-entry back into technological civilization.

## DAY EIGHTEEN

### *American Tourists*

7AM - mood: stiff from too much sleep

"That's the best night's sleep I've had in several weeks," Nette said as she roused herself. Digging through our bags for appropriate clothing to keep warm we needed a change of attire from what we had been accustomed to in Kenya. There would be no sweating, (only sweaters), here for the next few days.

The BBC news channel was filling us in on current world events as I sliced the final slab of the herb and garlic gouda that along with a hunk of salami and some fresh facoccia bread served as our last night's meal. A double-strength, double-sugar, double-cream, cup of coffee rounds out the morning foray. We need to be at the bus depot by nine to catch a morning tour of the Dutch countryside.



A cool tour of a clog shop and cheese farm (uh oh, more cheese) rounded out the morning.

After visiting a fully operational windmill I gained insight into the ingenuity of the Dutch and could see why they were such great sailors and tradesmen.



A late night stroll through the streets and squares completed our short visit to this international destination. It is amazing to see that even the extreme cold weather doesn't hinder the activities of the street hustlers, gypsy beggars, con artists, and performers who are all out en masse to work the crowds for whatever they can get. A juggler in shorts and a t-shirt, an old, pitiful, forlorn looking woman with a basket on her lap, a guy dressed like Batman standing on a bucket, and countless other shady night-dwellers (many of which I will not elaborate about, but through common knowledge make up the reputation of a particular district of the city) have taken to the streets to join the activities that make the place what it is.

## DAY NINETEEN

### *Heading Home*

4:30AM - mood: intent

Only a few people are stirring at this early hour as we drag our bags through the brick and cobblestone alley that the shifty, self-appointed, raggedy guide took us through two days previous. Four young men stumble out of a pub, boisterously recapping their escapades of the prior night. I feel a strange connection with the city and anticipate a return sometime in the future. An unusual familiarity envelops me as we head back towards Central Station to catch the first morning train to the airport.

7AM - "Sunrise over Greenland"

mood: wide awake

As we cruise above the cloud layer I realize that it is now 3PM in Kenya and 1PM in Amsterdam. My body has no reference as far as the clock is concerned, so it becomes a time-keeper of its own, dictating when certain functions should take place. The horizon is breaking forth in bright orange, gold, and yellow hues. It is a stark contrast with what I can see of the dark, barren ground laden with ice below.

The medical expertise of my wife has ascertained that the guy seated directly behind me is sick. The past two hours have been intermittently disrupted by gags and gasps as he attempts to sleep. It's so loud that he is aggravating everyone else in the cabin. The woman seated next to him is a real trooper, but frequent glances from my direction give me the impression that she would rather climb out the window than spend another minute with some guy she doesn't know who appears to be choking on his own post nasal drip.

10:30AM - mood: sore cheeks

We have been in the air almost eight hours. There is no secret formula for making a long-range, economy seat flight bearable, except for maybe a "good, positive attitude," which certainly comes in handy when having to endure the strain of many odd and interesting tests. Great comfort can be obtained by realizing that everyone else is in the same cattle-car and trying to gut it out together. View it as somewhat of a family bonding experience. Ouch!

Various unique trials are always present. That could justify the writing of another journal. Things like assorted body smells and gaseous emanations, stewardesses with poor people skills who hate their occupations, extremely limited personal space, and oh yeah, pray that you don't get a seat assignment next to the lav. There will be a steady parade of people who are not particularly pleased with having to wait in line to relieve themselves, not to mention the undesirable aromatics that frequent those who have stopped by for a visit.

2PM - Back in Detroit International airport and guess where we are heading? Yep, Chili's! I'm feelin' a super-spicy nacho, for sure.

4PM - The plane is half full of Green Bay Packer fans. Together, before someone tells us outright, we determine that that the Packers will be playing the Jags tomorrow in Jacksonville.

I feel like I have been thrust into a reality TV show as I resist the temptation to watch the young Swedish couple seated in front of me, giggle, lollygag, and lip-lock the whole way. Maybe they are newlyweds, maybe they aren't even married. One thing is for sure, they really like each other. Please, I'm way too tired for all this. I just want to get home.

The bright orange stratocumulus clouds have formed like a protective blanket over the Okefenokee Swamp. It was only a few hours ago that I sat enthralled by the sun rising over Greenland and now I get to witness it setting over North Florida. I feel the pressure in my ears as we begin the descent into Jacksonville. Squeezing my wife's hand I thank her for the awesome companionship on the journey. I also thank God for his presence and promises which have never failed me, nor do I believe ever will.