

Beautifully Unusual

Monica has always been a strong kid. She moved over two dozen times before she turned two. She had more stamps in her passport by the age of 5 than most people have at 30. She interacts daily with people from 3 or more different cultural backgrounds. A girl of deep passions, she expresses herself best through art. She was basically non-verbal until late preschool and got around this by drawing detailed pictures about how she felt or what she wanted. While her ability to communicate verbally has improved, she still finds herself most fluent in art. These days she regularly keeps us updated on our status as parents with little, well-illustrated notes that say things like: "My mom is the very best" or, "Why do you hate me." (I thought I had a few more years before teenage attitude hit?!)

We are proud of her hard work in school- some things have been easier for her than others. But we are facing some big challenges. Monica was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder and sensory processing disorder when she was 3. In almost every way this "quirk" adds far more to her than it takes away. We are so grateful for the creative person that she is growing to be. However we have reached a place where we need help.

Monica and Ashley will be traveling to the USA in early 2019 to see some specialists. We ask for your prayers over this as it is a complicated situation. Our first concern is that we find the right kinds of doctors, therapists (physical & behavioral), and counselors for Monica. God has brought the perfect possible people forward for this in the past, and we are trusting that He is again going ahead of Monica in this way.

We ask for prayer that Monica would be receptive of the treatment plans, lessons, diets, etc. It is not easy for kids on the spectrum to go through big changes and that is what we expect for her in the coming year.

Monica has asked that you pray for her to learn how to control her emotions. This is her biggest sensory challenge and she struggles daily with it.

This last year or so we have seen her grow and change in so many ways. God is good. With some input from specialists, we hope to see Monica continue to develop and thrive.



Kellers in Africa



Unheard Of

"For 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?" Romans 10:13-14

When I asked the question, the room was silent. Blank faces stared back at me and there was no response. I asked again: "Who here has ever heard a sermon in their church on how to resist temptation?" No response. I asked again in different ways, hoping that maybe they didn't understand my English. They understood, but there was only silence. Not one police officer there had ever heard from the Word of God on how to resist sin and the deceptions of Satan.

This is why they die.

I asked the question because, in a previous seminar, one of the officers had told me, "We are glad for your coming, but you have come late. So many officers have died already. If they had heard this teaching, then they could have lived." He was talking about the problem of HIV/AIDS. Many officers are buried every year because they lack understanding of how HIV is contracted, how to resist temptation, and what treatment can be made if tested positive.



To address this critical issue, I have started including specific lessons on marriage, relationships, and maintaining fidelity as the only sure method of HIV prevention. I explain the Biblical standards that God has revealed, along with practical ways to resist temptation and pursue a godly character.

The police seminars are a joint-effort with the the Police Chaplains from the provincial headquarters. Dr. Chali, their HIV/AIDS coordinator, joins us to teach HIV/AIDS awareness. He shows graphic slides of STIs and explains how they are contracted. This is harsh and horrific... but it really reinforces the realities of the diseases. The Biblical teachings and instruction show how their lifestyle choices lead to the infections. They are already all too aware that disease-contraction leads to death.

If they already understand that HIV/AIDS leads to death... why do they need to be taught about it? One of the main reasons why HIV is still such a huge problem amongst the educated (like the police) is because of a cultural practice known as "save-face." If someone is tested and found to be HIV positive, no one will talk about it. They want to avoid the shame of stigma. Even when attending funerals, no one says, "This person died from AIDS." Instead they will say, "This person had TB/pneumonia/bowel infection" or, "He was sick." Linguistically dancing around the issue

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has cultivated a sense of denial. At the same time, over 10% of all outpatient care in the hospitals is directly related to STI/HIV treatment and much, much more than that is related to issues of immune suppression and increased susceptibility to secondary infections. For example, TB preys primarily upon the immune-suppressed: small children, the elderly... and those infected with HIV/AIDS. The officially published HIV/AIDS rate in Zambia is around 20%. However, the reality is that 30-40% of the population is infected.

YOUR PRAYERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Please pray for:

- the men and women of the police force to understand and resist temptation, so that they can live to make an impact for Christ on their families and communities.
- missionaries and those serving in foreign countries as they struggle under a heavy load of bureaucracy and expense.
- Monica as she struggles with the challenges of autism and navigating life as a pre-teen.



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The Impact of HIV/AIDS

According to PEPFAR and Avert (international organizations leading the battle against AIDS), close to half of the people who are infected with HIV/AIDS have not even been diagnosed. Many of those who have been diagnosed do not take the ARVs (antiretrovirals), and of those who do take the medication, a good portion of them still have communicable HIV.

Depending on what demographic we are looking at (rural or urban, level of education, exposure to accurate HIV prevention information, socio-economic level, etc), the HIV/AIDS rate in Zambia is in the 10-20% range. (Sex workers) have a substantially higher rate than that.

This means that HIV/AIDS is able to spread at a truly alarming rate- and this most rampantly amongst the poorest, most disadvantaged, and least reached populations.

in Africa is the many, many times that we see the far-reaching and devastating impact that HIV/AIDS has on families and communities.

It is easy for us to pass quick judgement on the situation. In western countries we generally come from a privileged background where education is valued, children are treasured, and a healthy, whole family is something much sought after.

But HIV/AIDS is ruthless and unsympathetic. It targets the mother and her infant through birth and breastmilk transmission. It attacks the sick and elderly when it is spread through unclean clinical work. It destroys the lives of the many young girls who have no choice but to sell their bodies or starve. It is common amongst the unfortunate women who are sold as third or fourth wives to careless men who seek only their own comfort and convenience.

The real gravity of the situation didn't hit me until we'd lived in Kabwe for a few years and I realized that I was regularly attending funerals- a lot of funerals. The consequences of these deaths on families, the economy, and every aspect of life here in Zambia are staggering.

The sad reminder is near at hand as we live behind a hospital. Pretty much every time I drive past it, there's a funeral. (Sadly, in Zambia it makes sense to have the cemetery next to the hospital.)

It is a bleak situation. To be honest, it would be hopeless without Christ. It isn't just a few habits that need to change- it is the cultural view of women, relationships, family, children, and the future.

But we *do* have Christ! We are the children of an amazing God who has a plan and a hope and a future for His people.

Over the last few years I have seen the men and women in the Zambia Police Force develop, not just an educated understanding of HIV/AIDS, but a deep desire to change the status quo. More importantly, there's a growing realization that all the programs and posters and condoms in the world can't stop this voracious disease. Hearts have to change. For lives and families must be transformed for Christ.

Recently our audio/video ministry was able to make a short video called "Stigma" for the OM AidsLink Zambia. It was blown away by this woman's testimony and the cultural struggle of being HIV positive. A life destroyed; a life redeemed.

If you'd like to see the interview, it's available on our website:
www.kellersinafrica.com/multimedia.html

Praying for the Oppressed

How should we pray for those whose lives are destroyed by HIV/AIDS? What do they need most?

The enormous number of people makes the task overwhelming! But these people desperately need that you can pray (some of them might surprise you!)

Please pray...

- f For acceptance.
If their HIV+ status becomes known (even if they are the victim, which is very often the case), the person is isolated from the community in many ways. They are asked to leave their churches. They lose their job. They lose any hope of support and assistance.
- f For the love of God to surround them, bringing them life and hope.
HIV/AIDS is a joy-stealing disease. Without Christ they literally have no reason to look for a future with any kind of promise.
- f For God to move people's hearts toward righteousness, transforming their culture, and thereby removing the threat of HIV/AIDS entirely.
The vast majority of the victims are just that: victims of violence or lies or deceit. However, this disease is still spread predominantly by the actions of sin and foolishness. It will require a cultural shift away from making a mockery of justice for the oppressors.

"For the needy shall not always be forgotten; the expectation of the poor shall not perish forever." Psalm 9:18