

HEART FOR AFRICA
"TRANSFORMING BIBLICAL PREACHING ONE PASTOR AT A TIME"

JANUARY 2022

From Pastor to Patient



*"For I know the plans I have for you,
declares the Lord..."*

Jeremiah 29:11

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We are keenly aware of when the Lord brings an experience into our lives that we know He wants us to share right away, and this is one of those times.

One evening last month, we received one of the messages you dread as a pastor. A mother's 14-year-old son has been involved in a terrible car accident a couple of hours away and is being transported by ambulance to our local hospital, which is the closest facility. Five people from two families were in a car that flipped several times after a rear tire blew out: the young man from our church—Meshach—and a mother, Kemi, with her three daughters. Relatives and friends of both families were meeting at the hospital to wait for the ambulance to arrive with the injured. Prayers started immediately.

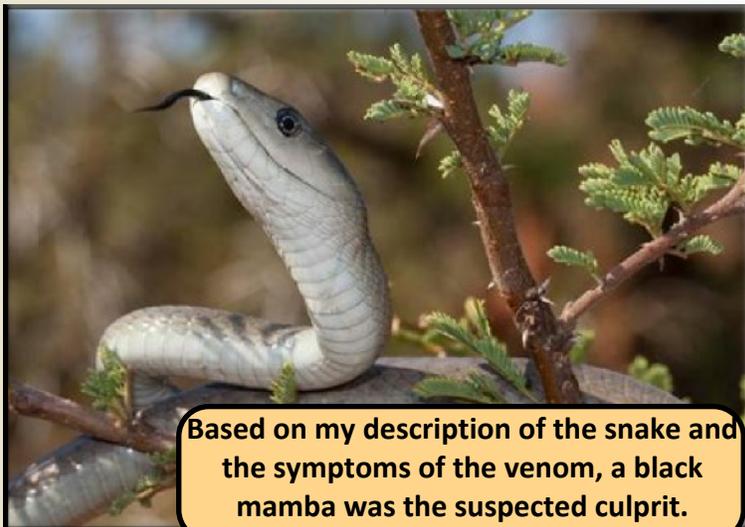
“Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.”
1 Corinthians 4:2

We gathered supplies to sustain us for the next few hours and made our way across town. We knew from experience this would most likely be a long night, but had no idea how long! By the time we arrived, Meshach and others were already in the emergency room being evaluated. Only family members were allowed inside, but when it was determined that Meshach's head injuries required immediate surgery, they welcomed us in to pray for him and the others. While inside, we learned that Kemi was drifting in and out of consciousness with unknown injuries, but the daughters each just had a broken bone. The focus was on Meshach and Kemi.

We exited the ER treatment room and went outside to wait with the many other people who had gathered there. Due to Covid, the waiting area has been outside in the ambulance bay for the last year and there are only 6 chairs, so several of us walked out to the parking lot to wait for updates. We stood under a light pole between two cars talking for about an hour...mostly lamenting that this

particular hospital is the last place you want to be admitted to if you get sick.

Suddenly I (Jim) felt a sharp pain in my foot. I looked down to catch a clear view of a gray snake rolling over my foot, then taking off toward safety under a nearby car. I reacted by trying to catch it, knowing I had to identify it. I raised snakes as a kid in south Florida, so I knew from experience and LOTS of snake bites that this was not a normal bite—too deep and much too painful. But the snake was too fast for me to even get close – I barely caught another glimpse as it slithered away.



Based on my description of the snake and the symptoms of the venom, a black mamba was the suspected culprit.

While kneeling on the ground searching under the car, reality caught up to me in the form of a searing pain beginning to engulf my foot. No time for panic...my best chance for survival was the ER, less than 300 feet away. I guess I could not have asked the Lord for a better place for a venomous snake bite! He is faithful and He is good!

My foot was bleeding from the wound and the pain was shooting up my leg by the time we got inside. The staff inside were astonished – the pastor who had just prayed over one of their patients was now a patient himself! The same doctor we had just met who had been called in to oversee treatment of the accident patients—Dr John—stepped up to take charge of me. Third-world medicine is often based on a “pay as you go” basis, so they wanted Janice to go to admissions and pay to “open a file” before they would even evaluate me. Thankfully, Dr. John didn't wait. By the time Janice returned, he had already written a script and two of the friends we had been standing outside with had run to the pharmacy to pay for it and bring it back. Everything became a blur for me after that as they began the 1-hour process of injecting me with a generic broad-spectrum anti-venom and digging out the fangs from the wound. I wish I could report that the words of Philippians 4:8 rolled off my tongue, but the pain was so excruciating all I could do was grip the gurney for all I was



6 chairs under the overhang serve as the ER waiting room



Left: The snake bit him on the little toe, but the whole foot swelled up and pain went all the way to his hip! He couldn't stand or walk.

worth and mutter a few weak prayers. This coming from one who sees all pain as gain!

I remember Janice trying to comfort me with "There must be a reason God wants you here." I couldn't argue, but it *did*

bring to mind Romans 8:28, so we began to look for the opportunities. Ultimately, I was admitted as a patient (another "pay before you play" experience) and was there from Friday night until Tuesday morning. During that time, Dr. John came by daily for talks and requested prayer for himself each time, which I gladly obliged. This new friendship may have been one of the main reasons. He also arranged for doctors with experience in snake bites to consult on my case. I could not walk at all and had excruciating pain whenever I lowered my foot from the bed, so I had to use a walker just to go to the bathroom. Even so, I felt convicted that the sermon I had already developed for church that Sunday was important to be delivered, so Dr. John arranged for me to be released on a 3-hour pass. Two of our church members carried me into and out of the church that morning, and His Word went forth.



Right: Jim preaching while sitting in a chair with his foot propped up!

Janice was readily available and onsite to trek from my room to the ICU several times a day to minister to both families of the car accident and keep me informed. I even had the parents come to my room so we could talk and pray together. Strangely enough, although we were all admitted the same evening, I was the last one to be discharged. And on the day I went home, another one of our church members and a dear friend—Peter—was admitted. He's dying of an aggressive cancer and was in bad shape. Dr. John is an oncologist, so we were able to ask for his help in ensuring Peter got immediate palliative care, which he did.

There were so many evidences of God's hand at work in all of these situations, and not enough room to write about them all! Although Kemi went home to the Lord, Meshach and the girls will recover, and Peter's last few weeks or months on earth will now be more comfortable due to knowing Dr.

John. A snake bite is a small price to pay to have been involved in each of these relationships and connections! Praise God from whom *all* blessings flow!



Right: Meshach at home with his mother Salome.



Catch up on our personal journey through our website news, and find many more pictures there.

www.jimandjanicelarson.com

Pictures of the Month



L-R: Mom (Kemi) with her 3 girls and husband. Please pray for this precious family.



Dr. John



Peter and his wife Agnes

CONTRIBUTIONS PAYABLE & MAILED TO:

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On-line giving available through our website



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PRAYER REQUESTS

- Please pray for miraculous healing of Peter's cancer if it is the Lord's will, or else enough strength to spend precious quality time with his friends and family in his remaining days.
- Prayers for Jim as he goes to Birmingham January 2-7, and Janice travels to Arkansas with her dad then.
- College classes will resume in Tanzania the middle of January, so pray for the instructors and students.
- We will be in St Petersburg FL January 11-31
- We are very grateful for being able to spend time with our kids, grandkids, and Janice's sister and father over the Christmas/New Year's holidays.
- Pray that Meshach's head injury resolves completely, and that the snake venom leaves no long-term damage to Jim's body.