

I had the privilege of spending nine years in rural Kenya as a missionary sent direct from my then supporting church in the UK to a Pentecostal church in Western province of Kenya.

I was ill equipped, had little formal cross cultural training, was naïve and green. Yet I had a desire to really get alongside the local people and did my best to do so. I made many mistakes, learnt the hard way and got crucified in the process! I realized the latter statement nearly seven years after my return! Yes, God has to put us all through a crucifixion if we ever are to be serious with HIM! In my case it just happened to be on the foreign mission field! What do I mean? Being misunderstood by fellow brothers and sister, used, seen as a walking bank, lied to, cheated, deceived, robbed....! What was God teaching me in it all? Number one, forgiveness. So important; to keep a forgiving attitude towards one neighbour and fellow Christian. It takes the grace of God, but then He forgave me!

I guess like many I went to Kenya with the proud notion that I was going to solve problems, be the answer to poverty, and do my bit for the suffering! I learnt that that was not the case. As much as the locals want you to fulfill the 'donor' role (and I found my self sucked into it!), you actually do more harm than good in the long term. Dependency is what inevitably happens, then extricating oneself from the situation becomes incredibly difficult.

I also learnt the importance of having a hearing heart, I mean, knowing God's direction in every day practical decisions. I remember, for various reasons (too embarrassing to divulge!) I found myself stranded in the capital of Nairobi. There I was just standing in the street, wondering what to do, then along came a sister in the Lord who I had met the previous week at the place where I lived! She realized my predicament and invited to where she was staying with her Aunt in suburb of the city. A divine appointment? Certainly!

I was lead to take orphaned children into my home, God always supplied, I never really thought about how, He just did! What am I trying to say? Despite our failings, and messes we get into, God is still faithful to supply what we need and be there with us. On another occasion, I found my self in a potentially difficult situation, (even dangerous) and although I didn't particularly 'feel' close to God, He spoke to me very clearly from His Word as to what I was to do. The lord is faithful.

God is not looking for successful, strong people. He's looking for those who are failures, who are weak and are prepared to live their weakness with weak people! That means being vulnerable, forgetting one's western life style, and being prepared to live like the local people sharing their problems, living their problems with them. Isn't that the gospel? Jesus never came to earth from a position of superiority, but humility, and we are to do the same. I realized that going with your money and projects just doesn't work. Be prepared to use local resources however inconvenient it may be and look, especially to your supporters back at home who want to see tangible results!