

HOW TO HAVE A CONFERENCE (FOR THE POOR) PART 2

By: Rolland and Heidi Baker, Iris Ministries, Inc. Maputo, Mozambique

“Nothing’s getting across the Zambezi,” Darryl announces over the phone.

“The ferries aren’t running, and I had to drive my Isuzu back down the Caia Road. The truck got so damaged I barely made it home!” Our Morrumbala Conference plans are already in pieces. Without our trucks, we’re going to have to fly all of our equipment and us across the river.

We get our team of pastors past the Zambezi to Quelimane by commercial plane, and I haul the generator and all the sound gear I can in our Cessna.

We manage to hire a beat-up van to take most of the team to Morrumbala, and again I load my plane down. I touch down onto weeds and rocks just before sunset the night of our first meeting. The air strip has hardly been used in years. We are in remote Africa, far from hotels and restaurants, surrounded by the silent suffering of poverty. Mozambique’s civil war was cruel to Morrumbala, a frequent battleground. Many died, leaving many more orphans. Now floods, hunger and disease bear down on the people with even more cruelty.

But today, hundreds of children in their rags jump and shout all around us as we unload. The missionaries have come! This is a big night for our churches all across Zambezia Province. Pastors have traveled on foot and by local transport for days to join us here. They are so excited, so encouraged. Jesus has not forgotten them. They are part of His Body, linked together in spirit and love across huge distances. In Him they have found family! They have wanted this conference for so long.

We move into simple guest rooms at a World Vision compound, a huge help to us. Soon the van arrives after a long, rough trip, and our team is together again. The sky darkens, and the stars of the Southern Hemisphere enrich the heavens in their vast array. The town is dim. The air cools down. There is no arena or auditorium. We just move out onto a dirt field nearby and see what has been set up for us. Thousands have already arrived from the bush, and they have been cooking maize in big pots over wood fires. Tonight they will huddle on straw mats laid out on the dirt under trees or by the field in a bombed-out building with no roof. They have no changes of clothes. There is no running water. There are no bathrooms or showers. They don't even have toothbrushes or towels. They live with sweat and dirt, decaying teeth, sickness and running sores. And tonight they will be cold. But they have come for the fire of the Holy Spirit...

Some crude planks have been nailed together for a speaking platform in the center of the field, covered by plastic sheeting for protection from the next day's sun. Crowds surge toward us, trying to see what we're doing. We set up our generator far off to one side

and run a long cord to the platform. Everyone wants to see the Jesus film this first night, so somehow in the darkness and all the confusion, we string up a king-size bed sheet for a screen and set up the projector and sound system. Thick, blowing dust is kicked up by tramping feet. Someone mislabeled the videotape, and we have the wrong dialect. The people understand enough and want us to show it anyway. The video plug is intermittent, and the screen keeps going blank. Everyone desperately wants to see. They press in and fall over each other. Children are under my feet and everywhere. Pastors are trying to keep the crowd under control. I'm trying to keep the video working. This event is unimaginably rare and special, and no one wants to miss out.

Just before the end, the projector quit completely. We turn on a floodlight and start preaching anyway. Everyone wants Jesus. Everyone is shouting, cheering, singing and praying. Out of disorder comes a huge cry for the King. We have come together for Him! He is the hope of Mozambique, the only salvation for these destitute people, so poor in spirit. In all the noise and tumult, Jesus is finding lost sheep, and He will hold them safely in His heart forever...

Eventually there is quiet, and we can tear down for the night. I walk back to our compound, exhausted. It's impossible for so many people to see such a video. But hunger for God has broken out, and Zambezia will not be denied the Gospel. For the rest of our three days in Morrumbala our team preaches and teaches—in the hot sun, in the dark night, at every available moment. No one resists the Gospel. Children eagerly gather to hear Bible stories. The sick

are brought to us for prayer. Passionately our speakers impart a pastor's heart to our church leaders in the bush, who are thrilled. The Holy Spirit sweeps through the meetings, and with shaking, weeping and loud cries the hungry throw themselves before God. They need Him, they want Him, and they love Him. And He loves them back. Hearts are filled. Energy and initiative rise up. Visions are granted. Healings are reported. A girl deaf and dumb from birth speaks for the first time, and her family and friends sing and dance all the way back to their village.

Now we have to move on to yet another conference to the south at Dondo. Again we will see revival. Intense Hunger for God is sweeping this country.

Our pastors do another careful count of our churches, and we find that we have more than three thousand, including those in Malawi and South Africa—a thousand more than we realized. We count as a church a group of more than fifty, and these churches usually include as many as can hear a preacher's voice without a sound system—three hundred or more. We are approaching the point of having a church in every single village in large areas of central Mozambique and southern Malawi. Pastors are calling us from other countries—Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, wanting the same revival. Our leading evangelists cannot wait to get to Angola And Sudan. The harvest is ready! The wedding feast is prepared, and the poor must be called in!

We are asked how we can continue doing such tiring work. How do we put up with such poverty and stressful conditions? How can we

deal with so many people and needs? How long can we do this? But we have nothing to gain by slowing down and trying to hold on to our lives. We give ourselves as a fragrant offering of love to Jesus, and in return He gives us His super-natural life. We have to stand up and face some of the poorest people on earth, who suffer, starve and die as most of us cannot imagine. Yet we can confidently preach: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: 'For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.' No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:35-39).

We have His love. We have Him! This is no time to be conservative. This is no time to let our hearts be captured by this world. We cannot improve on His will and His life. Let's concentrate on what captures God's attention, and spend ourselves as He spends Himself. He knows what is worthwhile to do, so let's learn from Him and not waste our lives. We will never run dry. We always have His resources, because He died for us. Let's run the race to win, and never stop bearing fruit.