

Chapter 22

Kenya

— By David Wilson —

Robert Moffat, a celebrated missionary to Africa in the 1800s, once gave an address in which 20 words went straight to the soul of a young Scotsman named David Livingston. God used these words to direct him to Africa: “I have sometimes seen in the morning sun, the smoke of a thousand villages, where no missionary has ever been.” After I arrived in Kenya and went into the interior, I would soon come to witness similar scenes myself.

When Elaine and I left New Zealand in 1967 for Bible College in the US, we thought that God would be leading us to Africa as missionaries, but He had other plans. OAC did not exist in Africa, so we were sent to the new Baltimore/Washington branch in the US. We soon discovered, however, that half of the people were Afro-Americans. They were very open to the gospel, and many were reached in open-air meetings and school assemblies. In 2005, in God’s perfect timing, I flew to Africa with Steve Nelson, chairman of our Overseas Missions board. Steve was deeply involved with a mission in Kenya and felt that the OAC ministry would work perfectly there. Arriving at the mission compound, surrounded by elephants, zebra, ostriches, baboons, and giraffes, I met the precious African staff. Each day, I took in their devotions and trained eight of the Africans in evangelism.



WILDLIFE - A REMINDER OF GOD'S CREATIVITY



TRIBAL PEOPLE WHO NEED JESUS

The nomadic tribespeople listened very well to the gospel as I preached in the open air. A public school welcomed me, and the principal told the students to listen very carefully so they could make the right choices. Most came from dysfunctional families, where the fathers were gone and often returned with AIDS. The median age for a Kenyan is just eighteen years, largely due to AIDS. In one far-out place, the mission nurse treated many sick people in a mud hut. The men sat with their



DAVID WILSON FINDING HARVEST

spears, which they use to kill lions and people who steal their animals. One hundred listened with wonder to the gospel presentation by one of my students, while flies tried to drink from our eyes and mouths. It was hot and dry. Perhaps the greatest moment came when we went to a river near where we had held an open-air meeting and where the mission was planting a church. The scene of 60 people being baptized, while people and animals looked on, seemed like it came right out of the book of Acts.



FIRST OAC EVANGELIST - GODFREY

After I left, I realized that everything I had learned in the OAC Baltimore/Washington branch would work in Kenya. I prayed for God to lead us to the man who would be our pioneer evangelist. In 2009, Steve Nelson called to tell me he had found the man. This was confirmed by another American who was helping with the mission. So, I flew to Kenya, again, and met the man, Godfrey. He was from a village and worked for the mission as a gardener. After training him, I could see that he had the gift as an evangelist. By God's grace, I had just enough money to rent a vehicle and buy all the film equipment, a sound system, and a generator. We drove out into the wilderness, where there were no roads, with Godfrey and a local pastor somehow navigating.



WATCHING THE JESUS FILM

There was no electricity or water in the villages. Shepherds put their sheep into sheepfolds at night to protect them from lions. In one faraway village, a woman excitedly came and told us that she had seen us in a dream the night before...two men (Godfrey and Tony, our driver), a woman (Faith, my

interpreter), and a white man (Mzungu) who was coming to them. We took this as a sign that God had sent us. Many prayed to trust Christ after the message. Each night under a clear, black, velvet sky with thousands of stars shining like jewels, we showed The Jesus Film in the local language. Even though we were on the equator, it was cold and windy at night, as we were near the mountains at 6,000 feet. Good crowds still came, and for two and one-half hours, they watched our film and listened to us preach.



**DAVID WILSON PREACHING AFTER
THE FILM PRESENTATION**



MOSES PREACHING USING BLACKLIGHT UNIT



MOSES - SCHOOL ASSEMBLY

Sometimes, women screamed at the crucifixion scene, perhaps never having seen a film before. Few, if any, knew of God's plan of salvation. Many prayed to trust Christ as their Savior. Now, it was God's time for the ministry of OAC to begin in Kenya. We would target the interior villages, where there were few churches. All of our OAC staff are required to graduate from Bible school, so Godfrey began to attend for one week each month, and two years later, he graduated. In 2010, Godfrey officially joined our staff.

On one of my visits to Kenya, I drove out into the wilderness in a vehicle bought from funds left to me by my 96-year-old mother. She had recently gone to be with the Lord, and I'm sure she was rejoicing with the angels as souls were coming to the Savior through this ministry. Each tribe had its own language, and many were animists, knowing only nature and spirits but not the living God. A drought had ravaged the area for many years, causing fighting between the tribes as animals were stolen. Not long after one of our film meetings, 16 men and two women were killed in the fighting; most, if not all, would have been at our meeting. We hope they were among those who had trusted Christ.

Sometimes, 400 would be drawn to a village open-air meeting, as they heard the sound of our African Christian music drifting out for miles over a silent

wilderness in the setting sun. They were amazed to hear Jesus in the film, speaking their language. They gazed in wonder at our messages illustrated in blacklight. Many prayed to accept Christ. Almost always, a pastor came with us, and he invited people to his church somewhere in the area or to a hut for Bible studies in their village. After two and one-half hours, the people drifted off into the total darkness, walking to their different villages with no flashlights but only the light of a star-filled sky. With lions and elephants out there, only God kept them safe.



JACINTA - SCHOOL ASSEMBLY

In one area where two tribes were fighting, soldiers were sent to stop them; six people had been killed. After we shared the gospel in a school, we saw even Muslim teachers respond openly to Christ. That evening, we set up on one side of a road that divided the two tribes. The screen was set up so that both tribes could see. Soldiers also came to watch the film on Jesus and keep the tribes apart. Peace fell over the whole meeting as the good news of salvation went forth through the film and preaching. Many responded to the Prince of Peace as Savior. A pastor planned to plant a church right there.

When I visited Godfrey again, he had malaria, and his helper had typhoid. Thank God for clinics now in Kenya, where both were soon cured with medication. When the first missionaries came to Kenya, only one out of every four survived due to disease. We traveled to Masabit (near Ethiopia) over a terrible road and slept on the dirt floor of the pastor's house. There was no plumbing or electricity. His church was made up of Muslim converts. Good crowds came to the open-air meetings, and many responded to Christ. At one high school, Godfrey and the principal took an unconscious girl to the hospital, while I preached to the students. She recovered. The next day after an assembly at another school, we were asked to take a Muslim student home whose father had just died. She cried and screamed all the way. Later, Godfrey's helper, a Muslim convert, helped to dig a grave in front of the house, and I gave a donation for the family, as was the custom and expectation. He was buried within four hours. How did they know he was dead? The village leader poked him in the eye, and he didn't blink! That night, many came to our open-air meeting on the school grounds, and we were publicly thanked for the help we had given. God had allowed these events to open the people's hearts to the good news of salvation.

After OAC outreaches, churches have increased in attendance, and some have been planted by pastors. We took two Kenyan missionaries who wanted to plant a church with us on one trip and drove them deep into the wilderness. After crossing a dry riverbed in the 4X4, we arrived at a remote village at sunset. After announcing our film, a crowd of all ages gathered, and the scene took on a holy hush as they became absorbed in the Word of God. After the message was preached, the two Kenyan missionaries asked the people over the microphone, "How many of you would like us to come back and start a church?" Hands went up everywhere. It costs a lot to reach these tribes. New tires last only 10,000 kilometers (7,000 miles) because of the sharp volcanic rocks, and they cost \$1,000 for four. But when you see God drawing people to Himself, you realize that the value of a single immortal soul is priceless. It's worth it all.

Godfrey left OAC in 2015, and Moses, who had joined our staff in 2012, replaced him. Jacinta joined us as our bookkeeper in 2011 and soon thereafter became an evangelist in our school ministry. God provided a Toyota car for her, so she could go farther and farther out to schools from our OAC office in Nanyuki. The Lord also provided a replacement film van, a Toyota Land Cruiser, which is the only vehicle that can stand up to wilderness driving. Kamau, discipled by Moses, also joined as an evangelist to work with Moses. Some months, the three of them reach up to 10,000 people.

One day, we drove to a village at 6,000 feet and announced the meeting from the speakers on our van. A good crowd of 400 came, with the children sitting up front. Suddenly, during the film, a child screamed, and as she stood up, a snake fell off her back. Moses said it was a puff adder, one of the deadliest snakes in Kenya. Moses went and quickly killed the snake with a stick. Jacinta prayed over the sound system, thanking God for His protection. The children moved to the other side of the crowd and would not sit down again. The film was continued, and after I preached, the presence of the Lord came down upon the people. Many prayed to trust Christ as Savior. A few days later, when we were passing by the same village, the pastor stopped us. He was rejoicing as he told us of how God was continuing to work among the people. He said that before, they were experiencing great difficulties, and there was a lot of hatred. When they saw the snake, it represented the power of darkness to them. No snake had ever come near a crowd of people like this before. When Moses killed the snake, it represented the power of God overcoming evil. The pastor told us of more people coming to his church, and that five had been converted that morning. Prayer meetings were being arranged, and people were calling for the pastor to pray for them. He said all believed that we had been sent by God, and they invited us to come back again. Had the snake bitten the child, the results could have been deadly, but God had other plans.

Truly, Christ is overcoming our “enemy” as He builds His church in Kenya. This front-line ministry of evangelism exists to help the church fulfill His Great Commission to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. It succeeds only by His grace and power. To Him be the glory!



SHARING OUR HOPE IN CHRIST AT A SCHOOL ASSEMBLY