

Learning to Love Malawi



Recently I've been digging through old photos, looking over the 25 years I've lived in Malawi as a missionary wife. There are an amazing amount of memories that come to mind looking over those pictures. My husband, Paul, was assigned to Malawi when he graduated from the Seminary in 1993. In remembering those early years, and comparing them to our life here today, several things came to mind.

We didn't know much about Malawi when we arrived in 1993 with our one year old son. Paul was called to serve rural congregations in the North of Malawi. We knew he was called to teach God's Word to the people there. We had something valuable to share and were willing to do it. What we didn't know at the time was that Malawi, and the millions of people who live here, had something valuable to teach us.

Reflecting back, I can clearly see how God provided for us in big and small ways.



The early years - Malawi, Africa

Our second child was born in 1995 while living in the small town of Mzuzu. When the doctor who delivered my baby asked if I had packed a flashlight I realized that I wasn't as prepared as I thought I was. Power cuts and dim lights are common. I learned to be ready for scenarios I hadn't had to think about living in the U.S.

After our daughter was born we had planned to travel throughout Malawi. I learned that some items, like disposable diapers, were impossible to find in Mzuzu. I was resigned to traveling for 10 days with a toddler and a newborn with only cloth diapers. It was then that I learned that God is much better at planning ahead than I am.

Weeks before I even knew I would need them, a group of Christian women in the U.S. had a baby shower for me and shipped an enormous box of disposable diapers to Malawi. The diapers arrived two days before our trip. God's timing was the best.



Nitz Family - Christmas 2018

As Paul and I met the people of Malawi, we saw that many Malawians struggled with the effects of poverty. Shortages of food, water, medical care and jobs impacted people's daily lives. As the needs of Malawians were made known to us and we sought ways to help, Paul and I were learning a lesson about giving and hospitality that Malawians had to teach us.

From our early days of language learning and visiting people in their homes, to traveling to remote villages with Paul to greet people who had never seen a "European" woman and her baby before, we were welcomed with clapping, singing, smiles. Chairs appeared out of no where for us to sit on while our Malawian hosts sat on the ground. If possible, a bottle of CocaCola or Fanta was procured for us. We never left empty handed. Mangoes, green maize, sweet potatoes, a live chicken - these people were happy to share with us. Not because we needed theses things, but because they wanted to show their love to us. Malawian's have a phrase, "*Tikulandirani ndi manja awiri! We welcome you with both hands!*" They welcomed us not just with their hands, but with their hearts as well.



Yes, I've learned a lot during my years in Malawi. I've learned to drive on the left hand side of the road. I can navigate muddy, rutted roads that look impassable to the uninitiated. I've treated our neighbors' dogs who had venom spat in their eyes from encountering a huge spitting cobra. I learned it's not really a good idea to pick up a giant horned chameleon on the side of the road and try to take it home in the car. These are all good things to know to live well in Malawi. But most of all, I've learned that God's people love each other no matter where they are in the world. God's people in Malawi have shown their love to me and my family for 25 years, and by God's grace we've been able to join with them in worship, Bible study, English classes, Sunday School, weddings, funerals, births and graduations. While my own family is growing up and moving away, and I can't physically be there for them in all the ways I wish I could, I am learning God provides for all our needs, big and small, in ways that I never even imagined He would.

Written by Susan Nitz, missionary wife in Malawi, Africa