

# In Your Presence is Fullness of Joy

- Psalm 16:11



Through an **accident** that nearly took my life in 2011 God flung me into world missions. (if you want to read more about the accident: <http://miraclespot-blog.blogspot.com>) although most of my ministry, takes place outside of the U.S. it is my heart to serve God wherever I'm at. If I can help you, pray for you, or encourage you please contact me through email at: [mike.heil@my.wheaton.edu](mailto:mike.heil@my.wheaton.edu). I didn't know this until recently when I had an encounter with an elderly woman, but I am the first missionary to serve out of our small Presbyterian congregation in over half a century. she had been the last missionary over 50 years ago, and she was filled with joy upon meeting me.

## PAST WORK

**European Relief Work in:** Italy, England, Northern Ireland, Germany, Romania, Moldova, France, Spain, and Portugal



- Teaching poor children in rural villages about personal value, discipleship, loving and taking care of one another.
- Children and youth development programs
- Motivational speaking, preaching, and bible studies
- Practical and humanitarian work: Poverty relief, digging wells, food distribution.

**Chinese Fair Trade and Community Development Internships:** working with Crossroads NGO, YWAM, and Danyun



- I got to write a World Fair Trade Annual report for Crossroads NGO 2013
- Worked in marketing and Development.
- We educated hundreds of students on poverty by running simulations and teaching them ways that they can make a difference.
- Sorted through 10,000 pounds of tea while running church planting programs and discipleship

## CURRENT WORK AND PROJECTS IN AFRICA

**Our work in Africa was done the countries of: Angola, Zambia, Namibia, Mozambique, and South Africa**

**Church Planting:** Using a method called DBS we were able to plant and nurture 4 discipleship groups. In the past few years we have seen such groups multiply down into the fourth generation. They are taught and equipped on how to examine the bible for themselves and hear from God on how to apply His Word in their everyday lives and communities.

**Childrens ministry:** We were welcomed in to more than 6 different schools and given the chance to speak to hundreds of children each time about who Jesus is and how to walk with him daily, Creator God, The Holy Spirit, and what it means to have a life founded in Christ. We also held children's programs where we would gather kids from the streets to come and hear the gospel, play, and revel in the love of Christ. In one single day we held 3 childrens clubs, each one varied from 100 to 250 children.

**Discipleship:** I was honored with the opportunity to teach a series on **The Holy Spirit** to a group of 15 students at the **Missions School in Angola**. I was able to share a part of this series at various churches and schools throughout Zambia and Namibia as well. In Angola we would have discipleship groups every morning, ages 8 to 25. The students would walk for miles to get there at 5,6, and 7 in the morning. The older ones would take responsibility, disciple, and go around early waking up the younger ones to make sure they made it to our discipleship group on time each morning.





## ZAMBIA: The Tsonga People

**Jude 1:24** “To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious **presence** without fault and with great **joy**—”

This was one of the hungriest and most passionate tribal groups we had met throughout Africa. They were desperate for the Gospel. **People would gather a hundred at a time to hear and see the Life of Jesus for the first time.** We carried a projector system with large speakers charged by the battery in our car, and in this way we were able to show them *‘The Jesus Film’* in their native language, Tsonga.

- We would go throughout the villages calling out the people, asking them to come and gather with us, to hear about the man called Jesus
- **Every night we put together a show for the people using dramas, songs, and testimonies to present to them what it looks like to live a life transformed by Jesus**

## The First Night: A WILD STAMPEDE

Completely unsure about the place we were in and how we might start gathering the trust of the local people we went out two by two praying that the Lord would lead us. We pressed on through the streets telling people about our event. At the watering hole, there was a woman who needed healing in her knee, she had arthritis and bone problems of some kind. It had cuts all around it from the witch doctor, it looked like he was trying to relieve pressure from it or something. We prayed, and although nothing happened in the moment, she was moved by our love for her. Later she came to the film and was healed. (After watching the life of Jesus and His miracles, she testified to them. A big plump lady hopping up and down on one leg ecstatically) We continued on our journey through the streets inviting every person and family we met.





We were extremely tired and even starting to lose our patience with one another, but God in His grace sent a divine intervention rolling right across our paths. A herd of children running through the village appeared to be chasing after a tire. It rolled right up to my feet, and in that moment I decided to do something peculiar. I picked it up, which to them made me look like The Hulk, and tossed it across the road. **They stood there in awe, staring at this strange white creature in front of them. As they stood their gawking, looking up, wide eyed, and in wonder, I knew I had won the favor of these little fiends.** As they stood staring up at me I realized this was a golden opportunity to get families involved in our ministry. If I could get these children across the village and to the field where our program was at then they might be able to convince their families would likely join as well. I realized at all costs that I must keep the attention of these children, so I twisted my face up into a perverse ball, squinting my eyes and sticking a distorted tongue up in the air, they began laughing hysterically and pretty soon the horizon was covered with little faces that looked just as disoriented as my own. They were copying me, and having great fun in doing so. **I started making gradual movements back to our base, like lightning they were right behind me. Pretty soon I was running down the street in the dead center of this tribal village with my arms flapping in the air jumping up and down.**

I looked back and saw an army of at least 30 children who had gathered in this parade, every last one of them flapping their arms and prancing down the street. As we ran down the middle of the street headed toward the other side of the village, children would spot us from their shacks, and before they could even put shoes on they were sprinting out their front doors in an attempt to join in with the herd, leaving a cloud of dust and their families trailing behind them. **The Children were now rambling behind me in a V formation with stragglers joining in on every front. When I looked back and saw the joy spread across these children's faces, it was one of the most freeing moments of my life.** Although I looked like a complete idiot raging down the street, God filled my heart with such joy and love for these children that I was able to set aside all consideration of myself, and in doing so I encountered the presence of the Lord. . .

***Being a fool for Christ takes courage, and sometimes may look stupid. It requires us to step out from behind the mask that keeps us continually concerned for our own interests and appearance. I am often conscious of the way I perform, the way I work and act and look. I want to serve the Lord well, with stature and impact, but God in His infinite wisdom doesn't always design things that way. Sometimes he might just be looking for the person who is willing to forsake all of that, and be a fool for Him, coming to him as we are. When we walk with Him in this way is we are inviting His presence to come and meet us as we are. It is an invitation for Him [His Presence] to come dwell deeper with us in our every day lives and as the Psalm says: "in His presence is the fullness of joy."***

. . . Eventually the children and I rushed and crowded into a field where we played for an hour until the projector was up and the rest of my team was ready for our performance. **As you can imagine this experience set a mood in the village and prepared a beautiful platform for us to share our message on. There were at least 150 people who came to hear the story of Jesus on that first night, over half of them were children.**



Every time the children in that village saw our car they would begin shouting with excitement and running behind it. At one point they gathered around me, and in unison, began to sing the most beautiful song. The sound was heavenly. I sat there in the middle of this huge circle as they played with my hair and poked the Makua (white person)

Sometimes when I'm at the grocery store God will put it on my heart to pray for someone. Maybe the clerk, an angry mother, or a person on crutches. I instantly find myself making excuses, telling God that it is embarrassing. Our Daddy just wants someone to obey Him and walk with Him when He asks us to. It doesn't matter so much whether they are healed or not, that is God's responsibility. Our responsibility is simply to be willing to walk with Him when He asks, welcome Him into our current situation, and show the person in front of us the love of God, even if it makes us uncomfortable. One time I sort of ignored God's request, so He trapped me and the woman He had asked me to pray for at the register. We held up the line for 6 or 8 people. The clerk at the register was looking at us like we'd lost our marbles, but it brought both the elderly woman and I a lot of joy. It made our day.



### THE PRODIGAL TAVERN

God led my teammates and I to a tavern. (the place where everyone gathers to get drunk and brawl.) when we approached the tavern a man immediately approached me with a request. He said "teacher, you must share a message with us. I told Him that if he wanted me to speak that he must find someone who can turn off the blaring music. Shortly afterward I found myself standing in the center of the tavern with an audience of 20 drunk ragamuffins in complete and total silence. As I began to speak about Jesus some of them showed signs of agitation, they started to mock me, one of them even stormed out of the building. But God gave me wisdom, he told me that His kingdom is fun and full of joy and that these people needed to see that more than anything. Two hours later as our lesson came to a close the majority of the men filed up one by one and knelt with me on the dirty nasty floor to humble themselves before the loving father whom they realized on that day, has not given up on them, and will not ever forsake them.

- For part of the message God had us do an interactive story, where I grabbed people from the bar and asked them to stand in the center with me and act out the parts as I narrated. The prodigal son and the adulterous woman acted out entirely by drunk men was hilarious as you can imagine. The prodigal son, drunken and bed-ragged, after a hopeless spree of pursuing various worldly pleasures, stumbled home into the arms of his loving father. That day, as these men knelt on the floor speaking in prayer and repentance, they also were welcomed home by their Father.

### TAKE YOUR HAMMER, GET UP AND WALK.

Zambia has been in a drought for quite some time. Our local pastor told us it had been nearly one year since the last rainfall. As the missionaries gathered together we prayed together with the locals for rain. Nearly as soon as the words had left our mouths it began sprinkling on us. The next day we were in the village praying a blessing over the household of a man named Ben. Suddenly it started pouring like you've never seen before. Because the villagers did not suspect any weather, this mans roof had been left unfinished. His house immediately began flooding. I prayed "Lord, I know we need this rain, but let it stop for just a moment so we can fix this roof, then let it start again" as I prayed it rained even harder. I began to doubt, but as I doubted God spoke to me. He said Mike you need to act on your prayer, act like you believe the words of faith that you just proclaimed. Pick up your hammer, stand up and get on that roof. I stepped outside in the pounding rain and as soon as we had leaned a ladder up against the building the rain had stopped completely. It stopped for 15 minutes and the moment we finished rigging the roof it began again. Sometimes we speak like we have faith, but we don't act on it. Next time he speaks to you, try to act on it. No matter how absurd it may seem, step out in faith, love your neighbor, step into the storm and God will show up.