

# **Travel Log for Ethiopia and Jordan**

## **August 30-Sept. 11, 2006**

### **Part II**

#### **Tuesday – Sept. 5**

Alan asked me to teach the Bible Study with the Nav. Leadership team this morning. The topic was Generational Discipling among the Poor, which is how Navs describe their ethos, to take the discipling process from disciple to mentor to disciple, and on to the next generations.

Almost everyday, Alan processed what he was learning and observing with the Ethiopian Nav team, mostly with Becky (on into late at night most nights) but with all of us as well. He then recorded his observations. Sometimes anyone of us might have a comment or insight that helped this process. He would then quote it back to us, reminding us that we said something or had an insight that was helpful. This went on all day everyday. It was good for us to see how much he wanted to get it right for the Nav. Team, for Tsige, for the whole work. Sometimes we just couldn't help the process, it was uniquely their own, but we would try.

I think the reason I went the direction I did this morning for the bible study was because of one of those conversations. Alan turned to me out of the blue at the International church on Sunday, and said, you are right. It is about theology. You know that I believe that the foundation for our work among the poor begins with God's heart. It so instructs our heart, head and process that without the scriptures we are dead in the water. But with them, we have a solid foundation upon which to build transformed communities among the poor. You know this!

Because I can't speak the language of Navigators, I felt permission from Alan to do what I can do and that's open the word together to hear the heart of God for the poor. I know that even in Addis Ababa, evangelicals are poorly informed in these theologies. It would be a beautiful journey together.

So, with these dear friends, it was exhilarating to see the scriptures with this preferential bent, so alive for the Addis family, so alive for their context, so relevant for their everyday encounters. It blew me away, with joy. But mostly I noticed my new friend Amsela, who is called to the poor, and has built a beautiful ministry out of this church to the neighborhood children, to HIV moms and their babies, to orphans, students, the hungry, etc. She cried almost the whole Bible study. I know those tears. She became a sister to me right then, in this city among the poor, to hear that what you have been carrying (and in her case pretty much alone) is the heart of God for your city, just liberates you, and yet it released a lot of emotion in her. I am telling you her story, because if we go back to Addis you will be working with her. And she longs for us to come and help her.

It was also at this Bible Study that I met Settie. She grew up in Addis until the age of 28, lived through most of the war, and then relocated to the U.S. for 17 years. She has longed to be back home, and has been for 4 months. She also has hibernated a calling to the poor, and is advancing rapidly in her awareness that what the Lord has hidden in her, is about to be born. It was an incredible encounter. I will tell you more about her when it comes to telling you about Sister Jember.

This bible study was important for me. I felt like I had something to contribute to this sweet team. I loved being with them, it was a privilege.

We had lunch at a Starbucks like coffee shop that serves American food and visited. I drew the construct of ghettos of hope and ghettos of despair for Settie in the back of her new book, *Walking Among the Poor*, a great read for evangelicals. Her questions are just like any we would have here, once realizing you are on to something and you need the next steps.

The afternoon was a series of visits to Nav. Team couples who have businesses, some subsidized by the Navigators, others successful ventures. We learned two things. It is hard to get work in Addis, even with a college education. And some micro-businesses struggle with turning a profit. We visited a paver business, with twelve employees, that is semi-successful. We visited a printing business that is still subsidized. We visited a business that works largely with NGO's and some government and makes potable water available to rural communities that haven't had access to clean water. This business seems successful. We met a entrepreneurial architect, who grew up in the nav ministry and is now with the Orthodox church. He designed the International church that was so beautiful, and is on the same property as Bete Emmet. And we saw the company that was providing our travel with the van, Abba Travel. They definitely are successful. Thinking about how to be profitable in Addis, in Ethiopia was a challenging stretch. How to see the potential and leverage it, work with the government, anticipate opportunities, find start up capital. Wow! It was a good day, but long.

Dinner was with most of these business couples at the Top View Restaurant, a beautiful location that sits on a mountain overlooking the city. We ate pasta and other Italian dishes, Addis has a long history with the Italians, who were never quite colonizers, but left their influence.

### **Wednesday – Sept. 6**

Each of us had a favorite day, or moment. Something that ministered to us in a unique way, just for us. This morning was mine.

We had been hearing the story of a woman on this nav. Team who some ten years earlier had an amazing encounter one night after dinner with her family. She had graduated from university with some layers of degrees and couldn't find a job. She had been out of work for over 9 months. As they walked out of the restaurant there was a prostitute working that neighborhood. Her family said some derogatory things about the girl. Somehow, this girls condition felt terribly familiar, and she said, if she didn't have a family who

would take care of her, she would be in the same plight. Prostitution in Addis is mostly about desperate poverty and sex trafficking of the poorest of the poor. That night changed her life. She began visiting these women at night, bringing them coffee and sometimes taking them to a local restaurant and getting them some food. Her relationships with these women grew, and she experimented with getting them off the streets for awhile and building in them some skills.

Thus began the WAR, Women at Risk ministry that is now independent from Navigators, but remains connected relationally. We were visiting their compound this morning, where they meet each day for devotions, classes, work preparation and other development. It is a two year program, that once you graduate gives you job opportunities and a new life. But many of these women had full blow AIDS and over the past ten years 27 have died of it.

We arrived just in time for worship. It was very similar to the Amharic church we had visited. Yet, it also was a lot like worship at camp. There was a hunger to worship, a deep place they were entering. They didn't mind if we joined them. I watched these worshippers, I watched them enter in ... find the center, be with Jesus, know the presence of the Holy Spirit, these coming out prostitutes. Most were really young, a few weren't. I saw our girls, literally saw them in the faces of these women. I knew them, I said, to myself. These little girls were already so dear to me.

Again, Alan asked me to give the devotion this morning. I had no time to prepare, so I reached into the archives of our stories and picked the 99 and ONE. You have heard it a million times, I have told it a million and one, now. Tsige translated. I took my Bible and stood up, a little overwhelmed with the sweet worship. I wanted to say, "I know that I am new to you, that you don't know me, but where I come from there are girls just like you and you look like them, so when I see you, I see them. Even though you don't know me, I feel like I know you." Instead, before I could say all of that, I just cried. I stood there and couldn't find any words for the longest time, and then they started to cry with me. They could tell I was trying to say something to them, and only I could cry with them. Even now, I am crying telling you this. I can't tell you why these little girls broke my heart, but they did.

So once I could breath again, and began like I wanted, Tsige and I got into a rhythm telling the story of this pursuing shepherd. They knew this Jesus ... I was just reminding them of someone they had already found to be their loving Lord. And we kept crying together, knowing how much we need a Savior who goes to the ends of the earth to find us in our lostness. I was so at home with these women.

After worship, we learned about the work and heard the sweetest story of the gate guard turned counselor and staff at WAR. This work has some funding that allows the work to be a separate non-profit. The women are successful, for the most part, staying off the streets and committed to their new lives. They need a church, however, a place where they can be free to worship and leave their old labels behind, where the church just sees

them as sisters in Christ. They don't have that, yet, and worship alone still in their small female fellowship. I want to pray about this for them.

Lunch was at the SIM house with everyone and Settie. She had come over just to visit with me about this calling on her life, this release that God is doing in her. We talked about a lot of things, relating to this calling to the poor. I knew I couldn't help her in an ongoing way, mostly emailing, and asked her if she would consider asking Dr. Jember who we would be visiting the next day, if she would be a mentor to her. (Dr. Jember is dear friends with Ray Bakke, has led a city consultation with him in Addis, and is famous at CCDA). She was reluctant, she had heard about her orthodox attendance and wondered about her faith. I said, wait until tomorrow when you meet her, decide then. We prayed. She is so dear.

Sarah and I had hoped to get one more two hour stretch in the neighborhood shopping for a few last gifts. The rest of the team went visiting a PIN family in their home. Wayne will tell you this story, because it literally altered Alan's soulful response to all he was learning. It was that powerful.

**Thursday – Sept. 7**