

SOUTH AFRICA UPDATES

Sunday, April 27, 2003

Subject: First Day in South Africa!

Hello everyone!

We had a busy day today! We tried to hit the ground running this morning after 48 hours of traveling... so far we are holding on with just a short nap this afternoon. We are hoping to be "feeling" as if we are living on S African time by tomorrow. (We are 7 hours ahead of Northern IN.)

We went from the airport straight to church this morning (after 18 hours of straight travel time). Small Paul preached. They then decided to ask him if he would also preach in the evening for their people and also for another Baptist church next door having a special "family emphasis" (a couple hundred people all together).

In the evening service the pastor asked Stephen and I to be a part of their family emphasis service by sharing a testimony with all the church folks about our family and some things that the Lord has done for us. (He came from a family of seven and wanted to encourage his families in the church.) Small Paul then preached on Cain and Abel. There were at least four adults who raised their hands openly wanting to accept Christ as Savior! He openly asked them three different times to raise their hands and worded the question differently each time just to be sure that they were serious.

At the end of the service, the pastor had everyone break up by families and join another family in the church for a prayer time which was then followed by a fellowship time. One of the men who raised his hand was seated just in front of Stephen and I along with three of his children, and we offered to join him. He has been coming to this church since Christmas. Since that time, he has read repeatedly through the books of Ephesians, Philippians and 2 Timothy. His name is "Virgil" and two of his kids names are "Jamie" and "Jessica."

Please pray for Virgil and his family. Since Christmas he has not touched drugs or alcohol or cigarettes; he attributes this to the Lord's help. He is especially burdened for his wife and a couple of older children in the family. It sounds like his wife is resisting the Lord and might be thinking about leaving him. I am sure that Virgil would be encouraged to get a general letter from any of you saying simply that you are praying for him and his family. His address is "4 Street Francis Place" Stand Fontein, Cape Town, South Africa. (Regular mail makes it over here fine with just a little extra postage.)

After the service, the pastor asked if Stephen and I would do a special program for the youth some Friday night during the time when we are here. Both pastors also asked us to preach in their churches one of these Sundays. I will probably be preaching in the one church on Mother's Day and Stephen is scheduled to do a chalk talk in yet a third church next Sunday.

Here are a couple of other things to pray for specifically:

1. Pray for Paul's nephew James' health. He has had a fever, etc., over the weekend and seemed to have gotten a lot better since yesterday, but this evening he took a definite turn for the worse and Paul is took him to the hospital to have things checked out. They diagnosed some sort of viral infection.

2. Pray that our final two pieces of luggage arrive and are delivered safely. Stephen's chalk easel and my accordion and part of our clothes were forgotten along with about 1/3 of the planes total luggage on the flight which went on to Johannesburg after dropping us off yesterday. This means more potential for damage to the equipment as well.

We will probably spend a better part of the day tomorrow getting organized. Thank you for your prayers!

In Christ,
Charles & Stephen Wesco

Sent: Tuesday, April 29, 2003

Subject: SA Update 4-29-03

Dear Praying Friends,

Praise the Lord that the luggage arrived safely! Thank you for praying. Not one piece of the 360 pieces of chalk was broken! It ended up that it was left behind in Atlanta.

Security or someone opened up my easel and tore it apart, but everything made it safely back inside with only one three inch tare on the bag. This is nothing compared to dreadful scenes that I have imagined since I watched the easel bag fall onto that conveyer belt in Atlanta, GA.

Charles' accordion, however, did not fare so well. He spent a few hours last night taking it apart. Two thirds of the buttons were jammed inside and he had to take the mechanism almost totally apart inside and then reassemble it. It is working fine now.

We are now on South Africa time in body as well as in spirit! Monday was a public holiday here in SA. The Hope Now Prison Ministry offices were closed, so we were not able to get our prison passes yesterday. After family devotions, we spent the day orienting ourselves, checking on the forgotten luggage, and so forth.

We were able to see the areas in and around Cape Town. Neither words nor pictures can describe the scenes that we have seen. The beautiful and the despicable are both observed at once. The magnificent mountains and the vast ocean are truly wonders to behold. However, the pitiful and awful squatter settlements of the poor are a dreadful sight to behold.

Food? Well we have had some new things and common things. We have enjoyed eating ostrich, and I love litchi juice!

Animals? The first African animal we saw yesterday was at Cape Point. They are called baboons. Little one year old Joshua Young is scared to death of them.

This morning after family devotions, Small Paul, Charles and I went to Pollsmoor prison. Every person should see the scenes that we saw in the prison. They are no more than "kids" bound in sin. Pray that God would continue to work in hearts and work through us as we bring them the truth that can set them free.



Charles led singing with the inmates using the accordion and harmonica. I (Stephen) did not do much more than lend a hand, observe, and share my testimony thereby gaining the opportunity to watch the inmates. In my own mind, I do not fully understand nor comprehend the things that I have observed; thus I cannot yet articulate it on paper. There were at least a dozen inmates today who responded to the gospel. We followed along with Small Paul who did most of the preaching while we got a feel for things.

Tomorrow, we are heading out early to another prison for the day. We will tell you more about the prison ministry later when we have more time to write. It is a wonderful opportunity. The inmates were very attentive and responsive, more than many groups that we have taught and worked with in the US. As we walked through the prison to the cell on the back side, there were fellows continuously calling out greetings to "Small Paul" through the prison windows. In the first cell 95% of the 50 inmates gathered around for the accordion/harmonica and then for the chalk talk.

Well, I will have to wait until another day to share more...I need to "hit the sack" now! Small Paul has a life-long habit of rising between 4-5 am for personal and then family devotions! He is constantly quoting Scripture during his chalk talks. He rarely has opportunity to read directly from his Bible while drawing. I assume that most of this Scripture memory over the years has occurred during his early morning hours in the Scriptures.

Charles and I have also been greatly encouraged by the Young family in many ways. We have heard many of their life stories and illustrations of how God has led and moved in their lives over the years. The children are also very responsive and respectful to their parents. It has impressed us to hear how Evangel and her brothers have a loving and open relationship with their parents, and yet they treat them with the utmost of respect. If they do not hear an order correctly they reply with "sir?" or "ma'am?" and also give their folks direct eye contact, and respond in like respectful manner when an understood order is given.

James is doing much better now. He thanks you for your prayers on his behalf.

In His Service and loving it,

Stephen & Charles

Saturday, May 03, 2003

Subject: South Africa Update

Hello to everyone!

What a busy but fruitful time we have had during our first week here in South Africa! Stephen and I have led well over 75 South Africans in the sinner's prayer since we arrived! The people over here are so open to the gospel! They listen very attentively! Even in the prison cells, approximately 95% of the 40-65 prisoners in each cell gather around the accordion/harmonica and chalk talk and listen attentively without interruption or distraction. I have rarely seen this kind of alertness and attentiveness in the United States. On Wednesday, James and I went into the prison while Stephen prepared ahead chalk backdrops in the Young's garage. James' voice was still not well so I did all of the preaching. I started out with a few songs on the accordion and harmonica to fire things up a bit, and then was able to preach even without any chalk visuals for almost an hour in each cell with the complete attention and participation of the prisoners!



Since then Stephen and I have been preaching together in the cells. So far, I have felt that our being together is most effective since I can begin with the preaching and a short sermon while Stephen sets up his easel; then I pray while Stephen preaches. I also often provide "accountability" to the rest of the room and periodically run down and invite a couple of the men who tend to stand on the sidelines not completely participating. For example, in one cell today four men/boys were just behind Stephen's easel persisting in a game of dominos. With just a subtle word of encouragement, they pulled away and joined the rest of the men sitting before Stephen. They were not completely attentive during the first half of the drawing, but by the end of the second half, they were fully attentive, and at least one of them accepted Christ!

On Thursday night, we also did a service at the local "Arch of Refuge" (a men's homeless shelter). We had a tremendous response to the gospel there. For the sake of the length of this already somewhat long e-mail, I will have to tell you the details some other time! Here are the "gory details" of the prison you have been waiting to hear about.

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Let me describe the prison to you in order to calm some of you who have expressed such concern about our safety. Then again, maybe the Lord will prompt you to pray more fervently for the prisoners and us! :-)

We begin at 8:30-9:00 am in the prison, after the prisoners have finished breakfast. We begin by showing our pass at the main gate. We then enter the prison "compound" which is enclosed with high walls that are covered with barbed wire. After entering two additional large barbed wire gates, we finally get to the main office of the prison. Here we are required to sign in. Then, a ten foot high, 3" thick, steel door is opened for us using a very large steel key. We proceed down a couple of hallways to another large exterior steel gate. Inside each of these gates are the large prison cells that house the 15-22 year old prisoners. These cells are organized four to a building. The buildings are like large, one-level brick barns with two sides exposed to the courtyard in each cell. There are barred windows that line the two sides of each cell. You enter the buildings through a large iron gate. The four cells inside open into a hallway that runs the width of the building. These cells are each about 3/4 the size of our church's Fellowship Hall. They usually house around 40-50 prisoners each, but in a few of the cells that we have been in, I have counted over 64 inmates!

Usually there is a few minute wait until a guard is able to open the actual cell door. He then locks us in the cell until we call to let him know that we are finished although it sometimes takes a few shouts over the process of 5-8 minutes in order to get the warden's attention :)! It is amazing how safe one can feel behind all these walls of protection! I guess I now better understand what it means when the Bible says that the Lord is our sure wall of defense! You cannot be in a safer place as a Christian than in the center of the Lord's will for your life!

As soon as we are secure within the cell :-), I introduce Stephen and myself and then begin playing "Nothing but the Blood" on my accordion. This works wonderfully to gather the prisoners from all four corners of the cell and from the adjoining bathroom/shower room. Down either long sidewall, and down the center of these rectangular shaped rooms are steel bunk beds with a simple pad of foam for a mattress. The prisoner's begin sitting around on the bunks at the one end of the room where we are. (The men/boys normally sleep two to a single bunk, so there are about twice as many prisoners in each cell as there are beds.) Usually, of their own accord, the inmates organize the bunks as seats around the front of me and sit four or five to a bed. Normally we preach to 30-60 men/boys per cell, depending on the size of that particular cell. So far, we have found 90%-95% of the prisoners in each cell on average to be flawlessly attentive and alert. Those who do not participate sit quietly at the far backside of the room and do their own thing. I have not "been mouthed off at" by any of the prisoners since we arrived! According to Small Paul, their culture/school system does implant in them a greater respect for authority in general than what our school system in the United States does. This helps to make them open hearers for the gospel! They truly are a "captive audience" as well!

These are almost all black fellows. Many of them have scars and skin disorders that are quite obvious. It is not uncommon to see 16 year old boys who have tattoos on their foreheads, arms, necks and legs. It is even less uncommon to see gross scars across their

faces and eyes that are the remnants of past fights and crimes. Almost all of the prisoners are missing their six front teeth! Often they have in past months or years had their gang number tattooed somewhere on their bodies or wrist.

It is amazing how much "order" there appears to be in each cell. This is ultimately due somewhat to the gang domination. The prison has three basic gangs. Those in "gang 28" are the sexually active sodomites/fornicators/rapers, and those in "gang 26" are those not a part of the first gang but who specialize in crimes of all other sorts. They especially pride themselves in thievery. The third gang is "gang 27." James says that he does not know of any at this time who pride themselves in being a part of this gang. They are the gang who specialize in murder.



Then anyone who does not claim part in either of these gangs is called a "Franz". They make up less than 10% of the total prisoners. Aside from this, there are no gang associations by those in the "Christian cells" that are beginning to form.

James is in the process of preparing a video testimony of one of the x-convicts that was saved about six years ago and is now working with the prison ministry. The man has quite a story, and James has a lot of video footage in the prison

that will help you to visualize the above scene.

Do you get the picture?

Now, imagine preaching to this crowd of young men, deep inside this prison, all gathered around you, sitting silently in front of you on the floor and bunks giving you their full and usually undivided attention! In light of all the facts that I have just related to you, this may seem like a total contradiction; but it is absolutely true! Many of them have never heard the gospel before. Normally between 5 and 20 of the men respond to the gospel in each cell! The fields are truly white with harvest here in South Africa! Some of these young men are in prison for months waiting for trial. Yet, on the other hand, one fellow who accepted the Lord on Wednesday, just arrived the previous Monday for stealing a wallet and was released today. It scares me that fellows like this will learn/see more evil in prison than they knew before they came. There is potential for a lot of corruption, especially at night when the prison guards on duty are far less.

Stephen and I have led many prisoners to the Lord, and are always careful to emphasize that the proof of their genuine conversion will be seen in their changed lives before the other prisoners and their families. Jesus said "by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples; if ye bear much fruit." The apostle John also pointed out the necessity of repentance for conversion when he said, "by this we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, 'I know Him,' and keepeth not His commandments is a liar and the truth is not in Him." Small Paul is currently about to

finish a revised version of his book on the necessity of repentance for genuine conversion which also should help in this realm.

After leading men in the sinner's prayer, and telling them about the Great White Throne Judgment, I also teach them about the implications of the Judgment Seat of Christ as well and point out the importance of living our lives according to the Word of God and in light of eternal rewards. Just before we leave the cell, we often conclude our time by all singing "Oh When the Saints Go Marching In." They seem really to love this song. Many of you have heard my harmonica rendition of this tune. They love to clap over here with everything they sing, and this song can be made to lend itself well to a form of clapping that is appropriate and fun :)!

There are usually a few Bibles in every cell. I normally ask for those who are already Christians in each cell, and have a Bible, to offer to read their Bibles to others in the cell so that they can all come to a fuller knowledge of God. Please pray for God to give fruits worthy of repentance in the lives of those who have, at least outwardly, responded very openly to the gospel.

On the home front, Mrs. Young is determined to find a way to give us culture shock while we are here! Last night she served us ostrich for the main course, and "snot balls" for dessert! I will describe them to you in a future e-mail. :-). Stephen will also have to tell you about his "demon exorcism" request out at the homeless shelter. We have also seen the light-hearted side of Small Paul since we have been here! He and Mrs. Young can truly be crack-ups and joke tellers at times! They all got quite a laugh out of the way Stephen and I each worded things in an amusingly backward way during our preaching at the homeless shelter last night. It was subtle enough, though, that I do not think that any of the Africans caught on to it (luckily!).

Please Pray for...

- **Dozens of new believers from the prison!**
 1. That they would show signs of genuine repentance to their fellow inmates and the guards.
 2. That they would read their Bibles
 3. That God would protect those new Christians in the cell from the habits and sins of their fellow inmates.
 4. That they would not only admit the evil of their criminal lifestyle to us and the Lord but also to the courts when required to honestly do so.
 5. That God would work in the lives of their families at home. In some situations there is no one to provide for their wives and families.
 6. That God would protect the younger and weaker boys who are also cell members from having their minds contaminated by gross immorality and evil.
- **Riaan Kristen and Charles Morrww's grandparents from the homeless shelter**
- **James' complete recuperation**
- **Numerous times that Stephen and I are scheduled to preach over the weekend and next week**

In Christ's Service and Loving it!
Charles and Stephen Wesco

Tuesday, May 06, 2003

Subject: South Africa Weekend and Homeless Shelter Update

Dear Praying Friends,

What a unique and special weekend of ministry we have had! We have been so busy lately! Please find attached a picture of some of the orphans at the homeless shelter Sunday night. I think their parents have died of AIDS.

Thank you for your prayers. We have truly sensed God's presence in some unique ways. Two of the staff (Peter Francis and one other) from the homeless shelter approached me after the service Sunday night on the verge of tears and passionately expressed how their hearts had been challenged like never before to make God a priority in their lives by reading, studying, and memorizing God's Word. He also commented that he felt that God's Spirit had been present during the service in a very unusual and powerful way. I believe that, more than anything else, this was due to your prayers! There was a great harvest Sunday night!



Stephen and I preached to over 1,500 people this past weekend. Sunday morning we preached at a local church (and for their combined Sunday School), and Sunday evening at the above mentioned homeless shelter about 30 minutes from here. The church we were at in Grassy Park has also asked us to come back and teach a Bible study group that they have. This church movement was originally founded by white missionaries to the area many decades ago who led many children to the Lord. Those children eventually founded over five churches here in Cape Town alone when they became adults. In working with children and prisoners we never know what fruit God can bring forth in years to come from our efforts in His name!

I want to share with you the type of preaching/teaching that we often find ourselves doing when not in the prison. The emphasis of our preaching at the church yesterday morning was on the importance of obedience to God and the necessity of His Word for the believer. They are always extremely interested to hear about our large family and "these two brothers from America," so I have been giving out many of our revised National Day of Prayer tracts. We revised our family Day of Prayer tract to have a South African flag in the background of the printing instead of Old Glory! They also had a day of prayer here last week.

Stephen preached on "The Word of God" with his picture of the Bible and compass. During this chalk talk, he does a survey through Scripture quoting dozens of passages that compare the Word of God to a mirror, a sword, fire, a hammer, water, bread, meat and milk, seed, a lamp, silver and honey. He also preaches concerning the great revival in Nehemiah's day and Nehemiah's great emphasis upon reading and studying God's Word. It appeared that most present already knew the Lord. The church committed to giving a greater emphasis to God's Word in their daily lives. I felt that God had led Stephen in choosing this message as it really hit home with many of the church members in a realm where they needed revival.

A combined Sunday School of both kids and adults took place after the morning service. I followed up Stephen's message by sharing a testimony about how my mother was not only the one who led me to the Savior when I was four or five years old, but how she also sought to make us kids accountable in memorizing Scripture throughout our childhood and youth. The emphasis during the Sunday School time was on Mother's Day as they looked forward to next Sunday. I quoted Jonah in a dramatized way and told the story of my mom promising me a new Scofield Bible when I learned the book of Jonah at eight years of age. We discussed Jonah's life and talked about how there is no greater way for us to show our mothers that we love them on Mother's Day than to obey them ("keep their commandments"). The kids were VERY attentive, and the response from the adults afterward was overwhelmingly positive. A number of them told me that they were now going to seek the Lord's face in also guiding their children into a much greater passion for the Scriptures.

I estimate that there were over one thousand people in the service at the homeless shelter Sunday night. We were told by Peter that as many as 90% of those present were not Christians. There were also many little children present who have no living parents. I have attached a few of their pictures! About 1/3-1/2 of those present stood in the back of the auditorium and foyer without available seating during the 1.5-hour service!

Our emphasis at the homeless shelter was on salvation and obedience to God. I gave a Mother's Day emphasis with the kids similar to the morning service. Stephen preached his salvation chalk talk on "The Burden Rolled Away", and I taught on the importance of God's Word and genuine repentance and obedience. We also taught them a few new songs (Nothing But the Blood and Jonah). More hands were raised for salvation than I could see or count! To God be the glory! As mentioned at the beginning of this letter, I do believe that God's Spirit was working in many mighty ways that night. They are not afraid here to show emotion outwardly when they are truly moved inwardly. Thank you for your part in that harvest and the heavenly fruit that resulted through your prayers and God's truth. Pray for the many new converts. We do not have opportunity to follow up personally and may never see most of them again. This aspect of our stay is quite frustrating to me! I see evangelization as only the first step in the discipleship process. Pray that those whose hearts truly are repentant will pursue God by meditating upon and memorizing His Word and that God would lead them to sound New Testament churches. My dad has done some research and is trying to put us in contact with sound church planting works in the area. Please pray that this effort would prove fruitful.

Last week, we preached at the “men's only” portion of the shelter to a couple hundred men who happened to be there one evening. As many as 1/2 of them responded to the gospel invitation and all were wonderfully attentive! The openness of these people, many of whom have never heard the name of Jesus is amazing! I am not lying when I say that consistently 1/3 to 1/2 of the unsaved people spoken to in South Africa have responded to the gospel!

Here are some prayer requests for/from those with whom I have had personal contact after the services.

PLEASE PRAY FOR:

1. Peter Francis who has requested our prayers. He is one of the Christian administrators of the homeless shelter mentioned at the beginning of this e-mail. Pray that even as he moves to another location and ministry next week that God would help him to truly make memorizing and meditating upon God's Word a priority.
2. Pray for a fellow from the prison named Donovan Maree and for his mother Dordhea and half sister and brother Heide and Richard. I had a brief conversation with him yesterday. We have been in his cell twice now, and probably will not make it back through that end of the prison again. He requests prayer for himself as a new Christian, that he would be genuine and honest before his family. He requests that you also pray for his family to cry out for salvation to the Lord. All of his family are antagonized toward each other and have literally stabbed each other on one occasion.
3. Pray for the safety of the Young family and their car and home. Last night the neighbors across the street had their car stolen. Also, it has now been released that a few weeks ago one of the local open prostitutes a block down was abducted and murdered. The Young's believe that this is the same woman who once approached them and to whom they gave a gospel tract. According to the Young's, prostitution is prolific throughout this country.
4. Pray for wisdom in handling beggars that daily come to the gate. All houses in South Africa are surrounded by high gates and concrete walls. We cannot be gullible, but yet we must show them the love of Christ. Our church deacons can imagine the challenge of this type of thing I am sure, but around here it happens on a daily basis! The Young's have put some time into helping and checking out the false stories of some of these beggars. This is a straining job!



They have been hoping/joking that perhaps Stephen or I might take this duty over, but so far, we have not taken the bait! It is quite amusing yet sad to see men/families pushing stolen shopping carts around on every street corner in the Young's neighborhood! The carts are overloaded with collected garbage and stolen goods. James calls South Africa "the land of stolen shopping carts"!



5. Pray for John Palm. He is the converted prisoner that I mentioned in our last e-mail about whom James is making the video and who now works full time sharing the gospel in the prison. He came to the Young's home on Saturday, and I had over an hour to talk with him! I learned many new things about the prison that I trust will help me to better know the needs there and how to preach. I also heard his amazing testimony that I hope to share with many of you through video when we get back. By the way, I learned why most of the prisoners are missing all their front teeth! At one time, it was a "fad" to have all your front teeth pulled. "It made a fellow more attractive to the girls" ...go figure that one out! Pray for his wife who is now back with him since his release from prison in 1999 and for his eleven year old daughter. His wife is unsaved. His daughter, however, "loves Jesus." John has been saved for six years.

6. Pray for the Christian cell in the "A" wing of the prison. They are painting an adjacent cell, and so they have moved in dozens of unconverted prisoners. This is a real potential trial for the relatively new Christians, and there is great potential for persecution due to the sexual perversion and wicked lifestyles of the young men in this culture. Pray that the Spirit, light, and protection of God and His truth would overflow this cell during this time. The lack of godliness on the part of some of the wardens in the prison also does not help. Some of them are Christians, but most are not. The prison wardens often smuggle in drugs and sell them for 4x's the regular street price. Their lack of care at times also results in some of the younger 12-18 year old boy prisoners being, what is called "hijacked," into cells with older prisoners. They often then find themselves molested and made slaves of the gang who hijacked them. There are a couple of the young "hijacked" boys in the cells that John Palm ministers to each day. So far, it has been beyond his power to convince the prison officials that "hijacking" happens, and that it happens against the boy's will. (Some young boys want to be in the older cells because those members are allowed to sometimes use the phone and prison store.) Usually the wardens do not bother to do anything about it. Not only that, but the hijacking is often done in a very clever way and at an opportune time.

Brethren, take time right now to pray for the spiritual needs of South Africa! Your prayers are needed and helpful!

Charles and Stephen

Thursday, May 08, 2003

Subject: Urgent Prayer Request

Dear Praying Friends,

I write with an urgent prayer request. After Charles and I preached in one of the prison cells this morning, a dreadful thing happened. As we were packing up the chalk equipment, one of the young men went into the adjoining washroom and hung himself. Praise the Lord that his life was spared, but please pray that God would work mightily in his heart and life. We do not know his name. He did clearly hear the gospel moments before Satan led him in attempting to take his own life. I do not know how to specifically pray for him, but his hopeless and dreadful countenance weighs heavily upon my heart. Brethren, I plead with you to join me in lifting this young prisoner up in prayer before the Most High who is the only one that is able to set him free from his sin and the grip of Satan. Our God is indeed the God of all glory and power! Let us come before Him.

In His Service,
Stephen & Charles Wesco

Tuesday, May 13, 2003

Subject: SA Update 5/13/03

Dear Praying Friends,

Hello from the wintry coast of South Africa! Their seasons over here are exactly reversed from ours. They are now in winter around here. Burr...it is getting so very cold! Last night it hit almost an all time low of only 55 degrees! (By the way, did I forget to mention that the mid-day temperature is still over 70 degrees?! The Young's home does not even have a central heater installed in it!)

We have some time off this afternoon! I just finished a short jog around the park, pond, mountain and ocean seashore that are all within blocks of the Young's home! Muizenberg Mountain is just outside of our bedroom window! We also saw miles of open ocean shore with only white sand and ocean waves that is just a few blocks from the Young's home.

Did I ever tell you all what the "real name" for the fruit called "snot balls" really is? It is "passion fruit!" The fruit is split in half, and eaten with a spoon. It looks really grotesque, but really is quite good once one gets beyond the look! We have really been enjoying Mrs. Young's and Gloria's (James' wife's) cooking!



Mrs. Young has gotten just about every unique kind of fruit and candy for us to try from their local super-store. The food here in Cape Town at least is safe, as long as it is purchased from one of the local established grocery stores. I am not sure that the same could be said for the fruit and fish being sold off the back of many pickups on a lot of the street corners. :-)

Last Saturday we spent most of the day with the Young's seeing the sights, sounds and smells of S African culture! We both even rode a camel! Have any of you ever seen an ostrich egg or a stuffed baby ostrich? We also learned some things by talking to some of the Young's local friends. We will share some more of this African culture with you when we get back, but I will try to spend a few paragraphs summarizing it for your mind's eye!

Here is a bit of South Africa that might surprise you. The unemployment rate is around 30%! On one street corner, not too far from here, there are scores of men lined up every morning looking for work. Every now and then a construction worker or someone will hire one of them.

This city is built right up the side of the local stone mountains. It is beautiful to see the lighted roads that wind around and up into the mountain to the lighted homes scattered up the edge of the steep mountain's side.

Since there is no shortage of cheap labor over here, there are many beautifully crafted buildings in the city of Cape Town. It is such a contrast to go from the Waterfront Mall to the squatter settlements just a few miles away where hundreds of thousands of very poor people live, often without running water or electricity! It is almost as if the city were "segregated." There are three distinct people groups that are standardly referred to as "black," "white," and "colored." Due to readily available and cheap labor, this local mall (which is about 40 minutes from here and is considered the best and largest in Africa) is filled with beautiful tile floors, windows, plastered columns and ceiling/skylight designs. It is breathtaking inside! I have not seen anything like it in the US. All nine of us had a huge meal there Saturday night with pork, beef, lamb and so on for less than \$50 US dollars.

There is an African couple whom the Young's pay to help them every Monday. Their daughter Devin has also become good friends with Evangel Young. Chantel (Devin's Mother) just got a job that she is really looking forward to on the other four days per week. It will pay her a whole 60 rand per day! That comes out to \$8.60 in US dollars. (The exchange rate is about 7.2. One year ago it was 14. However, AIDS is expected to totally destroy South Africa's economy within the next 5-7 years.) Although there is a 14% VAT tax on all their purchases, there is no government aid. Living standards are quite different here! We are truly blessed with the standard of living we have in the United States!

Last night we had dinner with Delgun Steel and his wife. They have a missionary home to help house missionaries passing through. The Young's stayed in one of their homes for a couple of months when they first arrived while arranging housing. Their ministry has been operating for many decades now. I tuned their church piano the other day. ...It is late! Will send more shortly!

In Christ's service,
Charles & Stephen Wesco

Wednesday, May 14, 2003

Subject: S Africa Update 5/14/03

Dear Praying Friends,

We have been very busy lately! Last Thursday night Stephen came down with a bad sore throat and was all plugged up. We suspected that he had strep throat. Thankfully, he has a supply of penicillin that he always carries with him. (An unidentified case of Strep progressed to his heart and kidney as a young child. Since then, the doctors have warned that another bad case of strep could be dangerous.) His symptoms began clearing up by Saturday evening. For me this created a double size preaching load for a few days last week. Stephen could draw but did not have the voice to preach! Please pray for me that I would continue to remain healthy since strep has about a ten day gestation period as I recall.

We have still been spending a lot of time preaching and drawing in the prison. The response to the gospel has continued to be very responsive. I am expecting to make it through all the cells of those age 14-22 once before we leave South Africa. I am in the process of learning some basic drawing techniques from Small Paul myself this week! By the way, those of you who are pastors probably already realized this, but it is amazing how tiring preaching can be! Three or more hours of non-stop preaching in a prison day after day really is quite taxing on one's strength! It is a lot of work to preach like this! But it has been very rewarding work as well.

This week has been a bit harder since we have spent about half our time in the "D" section, which is known to be the strongest in gang domination. They also do not have Christian "chiefs" (wardens) as some of the other sections do, and so it is obvious that there is more perversion taking place in this building. They also have not had the gospel taken to them as strongly and regularly as some of the other sections have. We did have many of them respond to the gospel.

Please pray for the new Christians in buildings C, E and D where we ministered last week. They will suffer for doing right in each of these cells. I left my backup Bible with the prisoners in one of the D cells today since they did not have even one Bible among them (over 60 inmates in that cell). We have found that most cells have 2-4 Bibles amongst the cell inmates. Overall, this D cell is very hardened to the gospel. We did not have to look far in the cell to become aware that this was the case. Pray that the new Christians in this cell would be genuinely repentant and would experience the power and grace of God in their daily lives. The gang number "28" was tattooed on many of their wrists in this cell and many of them had whole paragraphs tattooed across their necks, faces, arms and legs. It is a vivid reminder of Satan's influence and control both here and in the States as we recall God's instruction, "Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print [tattoo, Scofield] any marks upon you: I am the Lord" (Lev 19:28).

Last Sunday, Stephen and I did a Mother's Day service at one church while the Young family went to another church. It was a fruitful time; Stephen and I both preached on the importance of God's Word in our daily lives and gave our testimonies.

At a church across town, Small Paul felt led to preach the Word in a very straight forward way. Although there was no outward or obvious rejection of Small Paul, he feels

that he truly stepped on many toes as a result of the straight forward preaching from God's Word. There is a sensual flavor that is apparent in many of the churches over here that is quite pronounced to an outsider coming in who has not grown up in the midst of this sexually perverted culture.

Sunday evening we all went out to Grace Baptist Church in Table View and attended their evening service, fellowship and Bible study time. It was a real blessing to meet those folks. This ministry is headed up by a few of EBM's missionaries. It was a real encouragement to meet these folks and hear about their ministry; we felt at home with them. They are about 50 minutes from where the Young's are located. I am hoping to be able to work out some way for transportation to their area in the next week or so in order to tune 2-3 pianos that they have and use. From what they said, piano tuning service is quite expensive in these parts, and they have therefore not had the pianos serviced for a couple of years. We are also hoping that we might have opportunity to minister in their church with chalk art/preaching during our stay. Please pray that we would have opportunity for this type of ministry as well and that through it we could encourage their folks.

Pastor Tim Mowers and Rod Perkins from Grace Baptist referred another missionary our way (Pastor Dave) who is pastor of Everglad Baptist Church. This is an independent missionary who works closely with the EBM missionaries. Pastor Dave is from the US (independent Baptist background) but is an independent missionary not specifically aligned with any particular mission board (similar to the Young's situation). On Wednesday the 21st, we are scheduled to spend the day with them tuning 4 of their pianos and then doing their mid-week service for the 50-70 folks from their church about an hour from here. In addition to this Small Paul also has us scheduled for a couple of other Sunday services.

We also received an update on the Bethsaida Ministry which is in the process of establishing Christian operated orphanages for many of the children here in South Africa whose parents have died of AIDS. Many of you are familiar with and are already praying for this ministry, which is located about one hour above Johannesburg. Please pray that things would continue to progress for the orphanage planning/building. A number of different provinces in the area have requested that orphanages be established in their area and will give them full control over the children! The ministry has finances to proceed ahead full-steam from what I have been told, and it is now just a matter of getting through some red-tape in the building planning process.

Driving is somewhat limited even in S Africa without an ATV type of vehicle. Within the provinces of Africa there is often an established road system but getting between some of them is quite another matter. For instance, in order to get to Bethsaida Ministries from Cape Town one must first fly into Johannesburg and then drive one hour North.

It is hard to believe that we have already been over here for two and a half weeks! How time flies when one is seeking to please and serve the Lord (1 Cor 7:32, 35)! My time over here has been so refreshing and rewarding spiritually. We also spend somewhere around 1.5 hours each day studying and reading the Bible with the Young family. It has made it possible for me to focus only on ministering for the Lord in this needy place Thank you to so many of you who have made this all possible through your prayers, support and in some cases even "filling in for me" in different areas while I have been gone. There is nothing that I enjoy more in life than being able to share Christ and

His Word with others that they also may find the reality of the Holy Spirit's presence and power in their lives as I have in mine.

The Young's have asked me to pass along a big hello to everyone from them, and they, also, want to thank you for your continued prayers. Stephen and I are really enjoying our stay with them, and have had lots of fun times with them at meal times and in the evenings. I had almost forgotten how much fun it is to have a two year old around the house since my "little" Joel is now almost seven years old! Josh is turning two next Wednesday! Joshua is such a bundle of joy, and we have been enjoying him (and the other Young children) immensely!

Ambassadors of Christ to South Africa,

Charles and Stephen
2 Cor 5:19-20

P.S. Stephen wrote in a private e-mail to us, "Yesterday, a Muslim angrily told me that he was going to kill me when I come back to his cell." We have instructed Stephen to report this threat to the prison and perhaps even request that the young man be removed during their visit if they return to this cell. Please pray for the boys' safety as well as their health! Thank you all for your interest and prayers for the boys' ministry in South Africa. -Dad.

Saturday, May 17, 2003

Subject: South Africa Update 5/17/03

Dear Praying Friends,

We spent a lot of time in prison this week! We have seen God specifically at work on a number of occasions! On our way into the prison the other day, the gatehouse guards asked James to draw a picture for them. James willingly pulled the car off to the side and did so. He drew a picture of a cross and a Bible, and explained the gospel to them while drawing! This is the first time that the Young's have ever had the opportunity to share the gospel with the guardhouse wardens! The one guard then told James and Stephen that his daughter had a birthday, and he wondered if James could also draw her a picture. James did the same, drawing again for this guard. Stephen gave them each a "This was Your Life" Chick tract and one for the guard's daughter. Since then, James' picture of the cross and Bible has been hanging in the guardhouse to be seen by all who enter the prison!

Last night I had another amazing thing happen. One of the prisoners (Angelo) with whom we shared the gospel in section D, asked if I could call his parents about coming to visit him this coming Saturday. When I called his home, his brother Kevin Willemse answered the phone. A very unusual thing then transpired that Small Paul himself has never seen happen before. When I told Kevin who I was, he became very excited and shared with me that he and his mother have also become Christians! He was thrilled to hear about the opportunity we had to share the gospel with his brother Angelo. We

talked for a little while on the phone about our families and the Lord. Kevin is now planning to visit Angelo at the prison today along with his mother, Elizabeth. I suggested that they bring a Bible for Angelo. Please pray that Kevin, Elizabeth and Angelo would humble themselves before the Lord and each other, so that God might bring their family all together in the unity and fellowship of Christ around His Holy Word.

Stephen and I both sensed an extra moving of God's Spirit in a Section D cell. Let me help you first to picture the scene. The two gang leaders were in the front left end of the cell. Their tattooed chests were "polished" and they had a number of rings on each hand. They were lying, shirts off, with their heads resting on a pillow in another fellow's lap. The two "slave" fellows spent the entire hour and a half that we preached in the cell "combing and stroking" the short curly hair of the two gang leaders with toothbrushes! The scene was grotesquely pitiful and yet almost laughable all at the same time. I preached very straight forwardly to all the men in this cell about sin, heaven and hell. I sensed God's hand upon me in an unusual way as I spoke. I also preached clearly from Scripture against sodomy, drugs, stealing and lying. We emphasized the Great White Throne Judgment and how that one day "every knee will bow" before the King of Glory (Phil 2 & Rev 20). We had the complete attention of virtually every one of the over 60 prisoners in that cell. The eye contact was very good and open. I specifically pointed out the gang leaders and how they were nothing more than pitiful men enslaved by Satan and the vices of sin. The inmates responded very positively to the preaching that we are not to fear man, but we must fear God who can destroy both body and soul in hell fire. No man or gang leader can control the heart and mind of a man who has been set free by Christ. Praise the Lord that many in the cell responded to the gospel!

About half way through our time in that cell, one of the gang leaders appealed to the warden to release them all for their normal "daily exercise time." The guard flatly refused, and chose rather to have them all hear the gospel without distraction! That same guard had shown interest in our ministry in the first cell we were in earlier that day. I had shared with him about the power of God that has changed my life and family and now also many of the prisoners as well. Pray that God would work in his heart. He and the other guards joined us for the first part of our singing and accordion music from the hallway of the prison.

Yesterday, after the prison went on high alert because of an escaped prisoner, Stephen and I were incarcerated and had an interesting one-on-one time with the prison officials. Details will have to wait... :-)

I drove the Young's stick shift car today for the first time! That was quite an experience since I have only driven a stick for a few weeks in my life, and that was over five years ago! Here, people drive on the left side of the road! So, I was sitting at the wheel on the "wrong" side of the car and driving on the "wrong" side of the road, not to mention, we got "lost" inside the prison compound!

Thank you for your continued prayers! We are leading a Bible study at a church today, and we will be preaching at two different churches on Sunday. So far, I seem to have evaded my roommate's bout with Strep throat!

In Christ's Service and Loving it!

Charles and Stephen Wesco

Monday, May 19, 2003

Subject: South Africa Prayer Request 5/19/03

Dear Praying Friends,

Attached you will find a picture of a Moslem. Charles and I talked with him for about thirty minutes Sunday afternoon while we waited for our dinner. His name is Abraham, and his ideas of religion are dangerous! He believes that you are all right if you have religion and repent of sin. He is right about the latter, but the former belief is erroneous. It does not matter if your religion is Christianity, Islam, and so forth. He propounds that the Koran and Bible all teach that you get to heaven based upon your works and especially by loving your neighbor as yourself. He said that everyone will be judged between their good deeds and evil deeds. I showed him from Eph., Acts, and John that this is not what the Bible teaches, and that Jesus is the only way to heaven. He then said that the Old Testament taught salvation by works; so, I asked him **where** it taught this in the Holy Scriptures. He inquired whether I had a Bible; I responded that I did in the car. He asked me to fetch it so that he could show me where. As I went out to the car, I rejoiced that he asked to see my most powerful tool and weapon--The Word of God!



When I returned, dinner was ready, and I sat down to eat while he looked through my Bible for his proof text. After about fifteen minutes, he came over to our table and said that he could not find it and asked if he could have a Bible. We readily agreed to get him one and parted.

Please pray for this man. Satan has used logic and human reasoning along with the teachings of Islam to harden his heart to the Truth. Rejoice that he has shown interest in the Bible, and pray that he would truly read it. Remember, faith comes by hearing the Word of God!

God be with you all,
Stephen and Charles Wesco

P.S. Follow-up to the Prisoner that attempted to hang himself: I asked a guard Friday if he knew anything about him. He replied that he was most likely put into an individual cell and punished in some way. This is all that I could learn about him. Thank you all for your prayers.

Saturday, May 24, 2003

Subject: Final South Africa Update 5/23/03

Dear Praying Friends,

It is hard to believe that our time here in South Africa is just about over. We have had a wonderful time of ministry both in the prison, churches, and with numerous individuals over the past month. Thank you for your prayers! They are greatly appreciated.

We finally received permission to bring a camera into the prison this week. I have attached some prison pictures of our ministry in a couple of the cells that day. We have many other pictures to show you when we get back. I hesitate to make this e-mail over one meg in size.

This morning, Stephen and I were responsible for the prison ministry's devotional time of singing and Bible study. I delivered the message while he drew. I preached on the importance of a clear conscience to effective ministry. We also talked about the Bema Seat of Christ and how important it is for a Christian to operate on the principle of "when in doubt don't do it!" Too many Christians try to walk the gray line instead of approving rather only "those things that are excellent" (Phil 1:9-10) in their Christian walk!



The two little kids in the attached picture were "stray" neighborhood kids that latched onto Stephen and me after I gave them a few of my grapes this morning! They ended up following us around the whole morning and throughout the staff devotions and chalk talk! I do not know where their "parents" were... :-)

I have attached a picture of Jonathan Clayton and his wife. He has quite a story! He is the main ministry contact with the prison leadership for the Christian workers who currently serve in the prison. He is an x-convict himself. He was in prison for embezzlement of funds. He was led to the Lord while in prison by a Christian worker named Jenny, also from South Africa (who is now his wife). They ended up marrying a few years after his release. He has led the prison ministry for a number of years now.

We had the opportunity to spend some time today with one of the prison wardens who is a Christian. We will probably also have a bry (BBQ) with him and his wife tomorrow. I have enclosed his picture. Please pray for Felix (Angelo) and his wife.

We have seen the long-term fruit that God has brought about in the lives of some of the prisoners. A few are now daily preaching in the prison! One teenaged boy in the prison (who became a Christian) has proven himself to the guards and has been given much freedom to move about in the prison in recent months. He is now (as a sentenced young man) going from cell to cell preaching as well as drawing chalk pictures of his own! I hear say that he has been quite gifted and anointed by God in his preaching ministry! This is exciting! This young man literally glows with the joy of the Lord in his life every time I have seen him!

We have been very busy the last few days (as usual). We spent Wednesday and Thursday mornings in the prison and then both afternoons tuning pianos for Everglen Baptist Church. This is really a neat church ministry. Pastor Rudolphs picked us up and drove us between tunings. We had a wonderful time of fellowship with him! He is a missionary who used to be with ABWE and has served here in Cape Town (Durbanville) for the past 18 years with his family. It was very encouraging to see and hear about their church planting ministries here in South Africa. His initial efforts have been greatly instrumental in helping many missionaries to this area. There are now approximately 30 missionaries in South Africa that he works with and helps. They have been instrumental in planting about five churches in this general area. These are good strong fundamental, independent and separated Baptist churches. I preached and ministered in the main church this past Wednesday to a group of around 100 people. This first church is going to have its own "official" national pastor within the next two months. Pastor Rudolphs has also seen the establishment of a Bible school and two Christian schools in this area.

Everglen's new pastor is a graduate of their Bible school. Numerous members of that initial church are now planting other churches all across this area. It was so encouraging to attend a church service that did not have the typical sensual flavor and appearance of most of the local churches! God is at work here in South Africa!

Yesterday, I tuned a piano for one of Pastor Rudolphs missionary associates. When he saw our family picture, much to his and my amazement, we all came to realize that he was in the same Penn High School graduating class as my Dad! Suddenly, South Africa did not seem so far away after all! :-)

Today was our last day in the prison since we are due to fly home Sunday night. We are really going to miss this place and ministry! However, it is a blessing to realize that we have numerous prisoners in Pollsmoor who have offered and promised to pray for us in weeks and months to come! What a blessing! Jonathan Clayton spent about half an hour this morning trying to convince us that we need to come back... Pastor Rudolphs has also worked quite hard at trying to "recruit" Stephen and me.

This is the first night I have had free since early in the week. Stephen and I are both scheduled to preach again tomorrow night and then again Sunday morning. We then must be at the airport by 4pm Sunday. Please keep us in your prayers. The next few days will be as busy as ever! See you all soon!

In Christ's Service and Loving it!

Charles and Stephen Wesco
2 Tim 1:9

SOUTH AFRICA UPDATES

PS We have continued to see dozens respond to the gospel daily in the prison. Here are the names of some from one of the last cells that we were in who have requested prayer. There were obviously many Christians already in this cell. This was the first cell that we have been in that had more than just the normal 2-3 Bibles per cell of 60. They had six Bibles in this cell. Please pray for these fellows! We had a very meaningful time with these particular Christians and they of their own accord specifically requested our prayers. They have been praying for Stephen's and my ministry throughout the rest of the prison. Periodically we stopped by to give them updates and new things for which to pray. Here are their names.

Carl, Henry, Martis, Ashley, David, Selwin, Nicolas Andre, Steven, Hendrick, Cosmo, Nicholas, Dolos