



Donald T. Williams in Uganda and Kenya 2006

One of the reasons our Lord sends Americans to Africa is to teach them patience. One does an awful lot of just waiting--waiting 30 minutes for a *mutatu* (mini-van taxi) that will turn out to be full (i.e., already several passengers over the legal limit of 14) or going to the wrong location, so one waits some more. As a result, one arrives late at the conference site only to find that the audience hasn't shown up either, for similar reasons. One must be flexible. The only information one can derive from the stated schedule is that something else will most assuredly be what happens. So you adjust your program so that it still has some semblance of coherence, and you console yourself with the thought that folks probably wouldn't have been able to absorb the full program in the time allotted anyway.

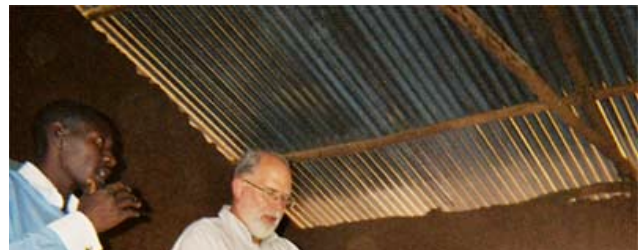


Between June 28 and July 26, 2006, I had the privilege of ministering in Uganda and Kenya through trips into the bush to gather neglected rural pastors for training for Christian Life Teachings International, the indigenous training organization whose founding I encouraged on my first trip in 2002. In four weeks I conducted seven seminars on "Excellence in Christian Leadership" in Uganda (Sidimbire, Bulokha, Paidha, Arua) and in Kenya (Mumias, Kitale-Moi's Bridge, and Kitale-Mount Elgon) in addition to preaching in nine church services--after one of which I had the privilege of praying (assisted by a translator) with an elderly woman who wanted to become a Christian. Many of you helped to make the trip possible, and the 180 or so pastors and other leaders (elders, deacons, youth workers, etc.) who attended the seminars all send their profound thanks and Christian greetings.



I noted in my seminars that most books and seminars on leadership--including those on Christian leadership--focus on the techniques of leadership: do this, say that, follow this program, and you will be an effective leader. Some of this advice is good, and I do not mean us to despise it. But I have noticed that the most serious problems in the church do not flow from leaders using the wrong techniques, but rather from the fact that the wrong kind of people are in leadership, or that people are in leadership for the wrong reasons. Too often the church is the Small Pond in which some small-minded person thinks he or she can be the Big Fish. But our Lord said that whoever wanted to be the greatest among his disciples should be the servant of all. Therefore, I concentrated on the character of the Christian leader and on the proper motives for being in leadership.

Most of the qualifications for an overseer in 1 Tim. chapter 3 deal with character; only one ("apt to teach") refers unambiguously to ability. And the motives for service exemplified by the apostles themselves have nothing to do with our own egos and everything to do with love for God's people and compassion for their needs combined with love for God and zeal for the



glory of his name, mixed with a strong portion of gratitude for his grace. Then I did say a little about technique, focused mostly on combining leadership by example with effective Bible teaching. Christ taught not only verbally but also by example, washing his disciples' feet and then asking them the wonderful Socratic question, "Do you understand what I have done?" A lot of leadership consists of putting ourselves in the position where we can ask the same question. Only after we are showing our love for the flock through leading by teaching combined with example thus will anyone give a hoot what our "vision" for the church is or want to get behind it.



The question-and-answer sessions are often the most interesting parts of the seminars. The questions reveal the profound lack of sound teaching--and profusion of false teaching--available in the rural areas. (Actually, the cities aren't much better--they only have less excuse.) Is a Christian widow required to follow the Old Testament custom of levirate marriage and become a (second) wife to her brother in law? Is a person who eloped to avoid the horrible and insupportable expense of an African wedding living in fornication? Can he still go to heaven? Are there still Apostles today? Who has more authority, the pastor or a woman in the church who claims to be a prophet? What leadership roles are open to a man with two wives? Jesus said that to follow him we must deny ourselves and take up our crosses. If you do not wear a cross, can you be a true Christian? Nothing in an American pastor or educator's experience will prepare him for such topics except an intimate familiarity with the Bible and a modicum of theological common sense, supplemented by an unusual infusion of that patience he came to Africa develop, and much charity. But you can see in people's faces the liberating power of Scripture rightly divided. Ignorance combined with "prophetic" dogmatism is a powerful bondage. But these people are quite capable of learning the truth if given a chance, and the truth sets them free.

In the last week I did my seminar on Christian Leadership in two locations in the more isolated and less developed North of Uganda, Paidha and Arua. I was impressed by the development in the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Uganda (RPCU), which had invited me to that region, if not in the area in general (which still has no reliably functioning internet connection). Only four years ago it was pioneer work, with the first churches just being planted. It was also the one spot where the leaders I was training were so illiterate and unused to linear thinking that I almost despaired of getting anything across to them. Now there are over a dozen churches, and each one has a pastor as well as a couple of lay leaders who were quite capable of following my train of thought to profitable destinations.

Much credit must be given to Rev. Emmanuel Oroga, the pioneer church planter in Paidha, who has become something of a pastor to the other pastors. He regularly visits their remote village churches by bicycle on trips that sometimes take several days. I have never seen such a dramatic transformation. It was going on before I got there, and I am glad to have had the opportunity to give it a little boost.



Then finally came the long trek back across the skies to Europe and then the states. It's good to be home. One's first hot shower in a month is a pleasure which reminds one of, say, Lewis's Perelandra bubble trees--though they were cool rather than hot. But the effect is equally refreshing. Ah, the comforts of home! I am reminded of Tolkien's hobbits, who were able better to appreciate the good things of life because they could do without them. Yes.

For those of you who contributed and prayed, my heartfelt thanks. Please continue to pray for the Lord's people in Africa, who face many challenges, economic and political as well as spiritual. Pray especially that some of the seed I sowed will fall have fallen on good soil, and that it will bring forth much fruit.

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More photos from 2006.



Karuna Falls on the Nile in Uganda.



A typical village setting.



The church at Busiro, Uganda. Yes, the tree!



Both old and young, the worship team gets down.



The worship is always exuberant.



An attentive and hungry audience is the norm.



The first qualification for Christian leadership is Christlike character.

An African Baptism



Procession to the river for a baptism in Mumias, Kenya.



Preparing the site for baptism.



In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit...

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