

23 June 2005

To friends, family, supporters and anybody else who may be interested.

Hi there!

You know, I often used to wonder what was up with these missionaries – you never seem to hear from them until they need something!

So, now I'm getting to understand why! Its because there is just so much to do and so often the work itself is so undefined and hard to explain that to try and communicate it effectively to others becomes difficult and so you just get on with the work instead and put off having to wrestle with letters like this.

It really is hard.

You can lay down "impressive" figures and facts, but how do you really communicate in a letter the complacent desperation in so many of the lives you connect with each day or the heart of a former "street preacher" who served the Lord faithfully yet still lives in squalor and asks you, "Why?" and, "Won't you please help me!"?

How do you really share what it is like to be the hand of God giving a man, whose face is gray with hunger, a loaf of bread?

To see and hear the wonder and encouragement in some teenagers who have just spent 45 minutes listening (first hand) to the story of a man the Lord put in your path and who grew up where they live now and hear how the same curse of poverty that dominates their lives was broken in his by the grace of God and some hard work? They just never knew it was possible!

How do you really communicate the effort and joy of taking a whole morning to drive out to a citrus farm high in the Sundays River Valley and loading 1,2 tons of market quality oranges and then bringing it back and distributing it to those who are going to need that Vitamin C boost the most this winter? Then dealing with the chancers who try and hassle what they can from you when you know they can actually afford to buy their own oranges!

How do you really communicate what its like to be able to share from the word of God with poor people and kids, who hear it nowhere else, and then actually see in a matter of months, even weeks, how profound the impact, of something we might see as so basic, is in their lives?

How do you really share what it is like to arrive at a fruit and veg collection point to find $\frac{3}{4}$ of it is already pig-slop and then be told you need to take it all or they'll find someone else who will!? You smile, say, "Thank you." and load up thinking, "We must be able to do better than this!"

So this is what I've been up to (as a standard/minimum requirement) this past while that you haven't heard from me: - As part of the group of volunteers at the Centre in Kwazakhele, we feed soup twice a week, to almost 300 poor and hungry children from the community; we make up 20 food parcels each week

for households (6 – 12 people each) who just have no food or any other means to get some; I teach the Bible and share the good news of the Gospel and how it applies to everyday life; I try and get enough bread and rolls together to support 4 other feeding programmes around town feeding a combined total of over 1000 desperately poor people; I connect with other people doing similar things to see how we can help each other and combine our efforts; I find ways of encouraging and giving hope to kids growing up in poverty; I collect yesterday's bread and leftover food from here, there and about, and take it to people whose lives really are so dire that they will eat what we will discard.

In the words of my niece, "That is SO cool, uncle Mark!"

It is cool! Just hard to really communicate sometimes. Unless you've been there, done that, got the T-shirt and had to take it off your back there and then to give to someone who doesn't have one, it is difficult to communicate.

And it doesn't mean that just because you're finally hearing from me now that I'm going to hit you for some need! No. Just thank you for your support. I know it's not possible for all of us to get out there like this, but without the obedience to God's call by people like you and the support you give Alma and myself, Don and Judy and the ministry, none of us will ever be able to get out there.

In the last while and other than our usual daily collections of food, which keep us busy enough, we have received the following donations:

- A lot of dry and canned food and blankets from a local church.
- Some clothing and toys from a high school.
- 2 ½ tons of freshly picked oranges, and
- 2 second-hand computers for the library we have at the Centre.

We still have a lot to do though, and your prayer and support for these things will be appreciated:

- Our pending NPO (Non Profit Organization) registration with the Department of Social Development.
- Minor renovations and touch-ups needed for the Centre – particularly the kitchen.
- Expansion of the food ministry with regards to volunteers and vehicle resources.
- A fruitful time for Don and Judy while still in the States and there last four months back here before returning home for good.
- Our holiday programme – 5 day kids club; teens reaching out into the community; some movies; etc!

Thank you

The Lord bless and keep you.

M a r k