



✖ Connie and I, along with four others on our team (none from Wayside), returned from South Africa on April 24.

We were invited to be the keynote speakers with an organization called **Unity for Africa**. **John Ofoegbu**, from Nigeria and now in San Antonio, is the director. We are still processing what actually happened. We went with our agenda in mind and God had another purpose in His mind. Instead of building on a firm foundation already established we found ourselves speaking on basic themes such as forgiveness, reconciliation, self-control, purity and holiness.

One night I changed what I had planned to speak on at the last minute sensing that God wanted me to speak on forgiveness. When I finished nearly half of the attendees (pastors and spouses) raised their hands for prayer, admitting publicly that they struggle with an unforgiving spirit. When I spoke on sexual immorality and defined it as any sexual relationship outside of the marriage bond, nearly half once again, admitting that they had a problem in this area, raised their hands for prayer, including some of the leading pastors. Mistresses seem to be rather common, even among the pastors. One man text-messed back to the S. African director, **Simon Ofoegbu**, that "I did not know that what I was doing was wrong until Pastor Troxel pointed it out from the scriptures." More than 30% of the girls between their teen years and mid 30's are carriers of HIV.

Two other major problems we encountered were first of all, there are racial tensions even among pastors. The end of apartheid seemed to do little to change this. This was quite clear from the first day of the conference. Some did not come back because they weren't properly acknowledged on the opening night. Some even boycotted our conference encouraging others not to go because we were white foreigners, or from other African countries outside of S. Africa. It is not just a black-white issue. It is black versus blacks migrating in from other African countries, and a great number of Indians also add to the racial mix. One black pastor from Nigeria told of how he was beaten up in front of his wife and daughters. He would not file charges. It took him a month to heal. Another pastor from Zambia, just one week earlier, had a mob of 250 people show up one night outside of his house in the projects and knocked the "cardboard" windows out looking for him. Fortunately he was not there. Neighbors took his son and hid and protected him. His wife died 8 years ago. He and his 9 year old son live in constant fear of their lives. There is an underlying rumor of fear among the 4,000,000



remaining whites in a country with a total population of 48,000,000, that once Nelson Mandela is no longer a presence and influence there, there will be a major bloodbath.

Secondly, their primary exposure to Christianity is of the “Signs and Wonders, Gifts of Healing, etc.,” compliments of Benny Hinn and a number of others. Every problem seems to have behind it some demonic power and presence. We heard some rather strange things. There is no depth of teaching or understanding of the Scriptures. This was very disheartening to me. Gatherings tend to be of a pep rally variety. I do think that we gave them something different that was attractive to many. They greatly desire that we return next year and they promise that it will be far different. This time around seemed to be a testing of the waters.

Pray with us as to whether or not God would have us to go back next year.

I ended up speaking 19 times and Connie spoke 7 or so. It has been a blessing for me to see how Connie is being used and speaks so naturally, knowledgably, and passionately to both men and women. She has truly come into her own. They even wanted her notes on one message for a “Bible College” course in the area. They called her “Pastor Connie,” and I was called “Man of God.” So, we expect a little more respect around here. JK

It is a long way from here to there and back. First we went to Chicago, then a 3 hour layover and another 8 hour flight to Amsterdam, then another 3 hour layover and another 10 plus hours to Johannesburg. I did have some fruitful times of witness on the most of the legs of the journey, which made the time go faster. But, it is still a long way to go. We came back via the same route.

We so much appreciate your support and encouragement. This is what keeps us going. Pray for S. Africa. Apart from a spiritual awakening I do not see much hope for their future. Pray for us as we try to discern whether or not we should make a return trip next year.

Remember Paul’s words in I Thessalonian 5:16-18 “Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

Thank you our dear friends.

Steve and Connie