

June 14, 2007

Habari!

I have made it safely to Kenya! What, I'm in Kenya? It's still not quite reality to me, but so far things are going wonderfully. We are in Nairobi on a scavenger hunt. One of the things on the list was to find a cyber cafe. I don't have much time and much to tell so I will apologize early for the run on sentences and if things don't quite make sense. The best and most rewarding experience so far today was the city market. At first, I was overwhelmed by the every seller wanting you to come into their shop. After I was there for a while and began bartering I actually liked it. I'm excited to go back again. Can you believe it Mom and Dad?

When we arrived in Nairobi we were greeted by four Kenyan students who joined our team. Having Kenyans on the team is very helpful, and I've gotten to know a girl named Charity quite well. They all are part of campus ministries around Kenya known as FOCUS. The director of FOCUS partners with Intervarsity. I was talking with him at dinner the other night, and he met my sister this past March. It's crazy the connections you are able to make places. We were taken to Watakatifu Wote Center about twenty miles outside of Kenya and we will stay there until we venture off on our ministry assignments next Wednesday.

We went to Ngong Town on the second day with no real guidance. We were told a list of things to purchase in swahili, so we had no idea what they really meant. When we asked people for things they laughed at us but eventually we got everything we needed. By now, I'm getting used to getting stared at everywhere we go. People point at us and yell Mazungo! (white person)

Yesterday we had the opportunity to visit Kibera slum. It's the largest slum in Kenya with around two million inhabitants. We met up with about ten pastors who were absolutely amazing followers of God. These pastors gave up their lives to live in the slum in Kibera to spread the gospel. They said that in order to relate to the people and to be effective in spreading the word of God that they must see where they are coming from and the conditions in which they live. These pastors have great hope for these people and their love for God is evident in everything they do. They are forming relationships with these people and makes huge changes. They thanked us time and time again for coming and visiting. It's them we have to thank!

While in the slum, I was surprised at how I reacted. I assumed that I would be overwhelmed by grief and sadness for these people. They make on average less than a dollar a day and they must pay twenty dollars a month for rent. They live in shacks so small, you wouldn't believe ten people fit in there after you saw it. Garbage and waste is piled up along the pathways, that they just walk over and the smell isn't so great either! Sounds awful right? For some reason I didn't dwell on the physical property. Spiritually, they are probably more rich than many of us will ever be. These people have only one thing to hang on to and that is hope in God. I admire their faith and wish that I could see God the way that they do. Each day they are challenged to see if they will survive another day without food or water. It amazes me though, because they continue to trust in the

Lord that He will provide for them. Coming into the slum, I thought I would feel very uninvited, and intruding on their culture. With a simple hello, they would greet me with a very bright smile and a wave. Many people invited us into their homes. These people aren't even considered to be in poverty because they are so far below the level of being poor. Children would run to us and greet us saying, How are you? How are you? I didn't know it was possible to love someone so quickly. I was overwhelmed with wanting to reach out to them and hold them close to me. These children want to be loved and cared for. They are not sad though, because this is all that they know. They think the whole world looks like a slum. It's very sad, but their faces are so cute and hopeful. I learned so much from the people and children there. I saw a lot of beauty in the biggest slum in Kenya.

After visiting the slum, we went to the Sanctuary of Hope, which is an orphanage that this wonderful couple started, with the help of Debbie Lee. They have rescued ten children out of Mathari Slum. We were supposed to go to Mathari, but their were acts of violence at the time, so at the last minute we were able to go to Kibera. The children at the orphanage were abandoned or lost their parents to HIV. I don't understand how anyone could abandon these children. Orphanages are a beautiful thing.

Prayer requests: For the people in the slum. That they would continue to look to the Lord for strength and guidance. For the pastors of the slum. That they stay healthy and continue to make a difference in Kibera. For our team unity, although we have been getting so connected with each other, that I cannot believe this is only the fourth day! Also for our health. People are starting to get mildly sick. Prayers that we would continue to empty our "cups" of ourselves, and look to Jesus to fill us up. I have so much more to say, but no more time. Thank you for your continued prayers. They are keeping me safe, healthy, and in high spirits. I look forward to when I can write again!

Bwana Asafiwe!

(Matthew 18: 19-20)

Elizabeth

P.S. Mom and Dad. I cannot wait for you to experience this together. It's going to be wonderful. I can't believe how much peace I feel that this is right where God wants me to be. I'm staying healthy so far. Yay. Can't wait for you to come. I love you.

Jesse- I'm praying for you and hope that you are starting to find a good fit in Tahoe. Hopefully you got the Adidas job! After all that worrying and being scared about Kenya, it was so silly. This place is amazing. Will you come with my parents?