



# The Vennell-a Scoop

I have tried to start this “story” twice and have deleted everything I had typed. My problem is not one of writer’s block, as there are many things to write of. My biggest problem is how do I convey what is really on my heart?

Let me explain a little of what I mean. This country is and has been a struggling bunch of people. They have great difficulty with things like poverty, drought, unemployment, sickness, and spiritual darkness. And all of this is really compounded by a disease that we know of as HIV/AIDS. I placed the picture of this older, wise looking man in the newsletter, but the reality is that he is part of an ever-shrinking minority people group. This people group has nothing to do with race or color, but one of age. You see, over the last 10 years, the life-expectancy rate of people living in Lesotho has dropped from 64 to 37 years of age.

This life-expectancy drop is

brought on by the fact that almost 4 out of every 10 people I come in contact with are living with HIV/AIDS. How did they get it? It can be from any number of things; it could have been given to them from their parents at birth; they could have gotten it from caring for a family member who was infected; or they could have also gotten from promiscuity. For me the reasons are not as important as the root problem. The root problem is that they need to hear about the love of Jesus and the fact that He has a wonderful plan for their lives.

I was thinking about this serious problem the other day and in my mind I thought of the phrase that, “time is money”. That may be true in a lot of ways, but for MAF and the other missionaries serving here in Lesotho, “time is LIFE”. That has become a new phrase to live by. We lose almost 3 people an hour to an HIV/AIDS related death. This means that for every hour we save the missionary from driving, he

has the potential of reaching 3 people who might be meeting their Creator that day.

Another exciting development is being able to bring Anti-retroviral treatment (ART) to the remote peoples of the mountains in order to combat AIDS. These medicines could extend the life of an infected person by 15-20 years in some cases. What a difference that could make in the lives of so many who up until now have had no hope!

We want you to be praying that God will allow MAF to get the Gospel message out to a lost and literally dying world. Also please pray that the medicines will stop the deaths of so many of God’s children. If you want to be a part of or sponsoring any of these things, please let us know. Together, we can make a difference.

## Special points of interest:

- Natalie can paint her lips with fingernail polish.
- Courtney turns 2 years old May 7, and already shows it.
- Lauren has learned how to read and wants to read everything now.
- Lydia has started a new habit of singing at the top of her lungs.

## Visitors, We Love Visitors!

We have had the privilege of hosting many visitors over the years but recently we had another visit by Tonya’s mom and dad. It is so fun to have family come out!!

I was able to take her dad for a few flights but the weather did not cooperate for our



scheduled JESUS film showing in the mountains. We had planned to go with a missionary to the village of Lebakeng but Alan Dial, the Baptist missionary, hurt his foot and we were unable to complete the trip. We are looking forward to rescheduling for a later date. Thanks, Myron and Virginia, for a great time!



## Since We Last Wrote...

There has been so much happening since we last wrote. My brother got married in Amarillo, TX, in January. I had really wanted to be there but cost was holding me back until I found out that my mom had had a heart attack on Christmas day. Everything was fine after the tests and such were done, but still, I have heard story upon story of missionaries who had wished they had gone home during a major crisis or family event much like these. Tonya and I decided that it was important enough

that Lauren and I make the trip.

Now I know there are not many of you who knew that I came home, but we had also decided that I would surprise everyone. So I arranged with some non-family members to meet me at the airport in Amarillo, and they drove me to my mom's house where I knocked on her door. Now, after looking back, it was probably not a good idea to be surprising a mother who had just had a heart attack, but it was a thrill to be able to see my family while we were home.

I can truly say that we are very blessed to have experienced the love of family and the generosity of so many to help make this trip a wonderful time. From getting to be a groomsman in my brother's wedding, to a gift to cover the trip, to winter clothes to bring back for the girls, to a pickup to drive while home, to a new computer for my mom, we have some of the best friends in the world. You are all wonderful and you touch our lives in so many ways!! God has truly blessed us!!!

## Furlough is coming up!

WOW, we can hardly believe it has been almost 2 years since we have been home as a family. We have been granted special permission to come home for a 3 month furlough this August, instead of waiting another year and a half. This will help Tonya in that while we are home she will not have to home school as we will be traveling a lot. We are looking forward to bringing these shining



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little faces home so they can be hugged, as well as give out some hugs. They are looking forward to coming home and seeing so many of you! We are hoping to get a travel trailer or possibly an RV and make that our home for the 3 month furlough. Please pray that all the details will fall into place for this time!

With much Love,

*Jim and Tonya*

## Prayer Requests and Praises

- Praise for a good trip to Texas.
- Praise for so many good supporters.
- Praise for God's protection over our family.
- Praise for safe flying and ministry opportunities.
- Pray for our furlough schedule and the packing.
- Pray that we will be able to find a great vehicle and possibly a travel trailer for furlough.
- Pray for strength as we try to meet the needs here in Lesotho.
- Pray for Tonya as she home schools.
- Pray for the health of our kids and us, as parents.

### Tentative Furlough Schedule:

September in South Dakota

October in Arizona, Tennessee and Texas

November in Texas and South Dakota.

**If you are interested in hearing what God has been doing, please email us at the address to the left!**

### Support address:

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