

Dear Prayer Partners,

As so many of you know, stewardship is something that every believer must learn and we have been teaching the churches about biblical stewardship. This week we had a wonderful three day stewardship conference. Starting on Sunday we studied how to be good stewards of our time, talents, and resources. We learned from Matthew 21 that our resources are tools that God wants us to use. Not to keep in a box or hide but to put them to active use to live for and serve Him faithfully in our lives, family, and community. To do this we must manage them well.

Since money is one of those resources, people here, who do not have much often struggle in this area. We wanted to give them some practical tools to help them manage their money. During this lean time with many suffering from the drought we have people searching on how to manage what they have better, and our desire is to give them tools to help them, not only right now, but for their future as well. I taught how to keep a ledger. Wade and I have seen from our own lives as we faithfully keep a record of our spending, that it allows us to see over a period of time how we use our money. We have, at times, been surprised and been able to make changes in our lives based on what we learn.

Growing up our money was often tight. My(Donna) parents didn't hide this from me but taught me how to budget and plan my money. I wanted to teach this. Often people, here, get their pay day for the whole year from selling their crops, and they make large or many purchases then quickly run out of money for basic necessities of life. My hope is that doing a budget and using an envelope system will help them make their money last and their home life easier and more peaceful.

Our stewardship is more than managing money, so we also discussed other topics like maintenance of the things God has given us, use of our talents, abilities, and potential and management of the environment(like good farming practices and observing seasonal fishing bans) to protect the earth and leave it in good condition for our children. I was thrilled when one of the members suggested we are also stewards of our children. Yes we are and what a responsibility that is.

We gave out some prizes to help them be good stewards of their possessions. The women got calculators and a lock box to help manage their money. The men were thrilled with Wades choice of tools and were excited to get a hammer, saw, and measuring tape. These items, while common place in many of our homes, are a rare commodity here in the village and to own your own is a big deal.

My(Donna) dad's garden is the envy of the neighborhood and many are blessed by it as everything he touches produces in abundance. I often have to research and ask his advise, but I am learning. I wanted my fellow church members to also have that opportunity for their families. For most, here, seeds are just too expensive to purchase. They struggle with feeding their families and purchasing different packets of seeds is currently beyond their reach. Wade and I got some large packets of seeds and divided them up to send everyone home with seeds for a home garden of many of their popular vegetables – tomatoes, onions, Chinese cabbage, okra, and impwa (small yellow eggplant). We also gave them a booklet with gardening instructions and tips. They were thrilled. Many avoid gardening because of the idea it involves a lot of expense. I and another man who has helped me with my garden assured them you can grow vegetables without a lot chemicals and fertilizer by using cow manure . I suggested they plant their garden like my dad who stops every fifteen minutes to half an hour to pray for God to help the seed germinate and grow well. We will learn to garden together and have God control our increase.

On Tuesday, the last day of our conference, we dealt with one of the people's biggest concerns and issues that they face - helping others. When someone here is successful and manages well and is blessed to have a good job and enough food or even more than is absolutely necessary, they are bombarded for help by family, friends and neighbors who don't manage well and don't have enough. As a culture the Zambian people are VERY generous and giving to each other. This is a good thing, but also causes problems. Many times they give so much that they can't provide the basic food needed in their own homes. Culturally, they can't say no, especially to family. Finding a balance is VERY difficult. How do you turn away your mom and dad? Not because they are asking for a new dress or cooking pot, but for food stuff. Its a huge problem and VERY VERY difficult. Wade and I have often faced this here, so Wade took the last day of the conference to address this issue from the Bible. He taught scriptural principles that we must balance the help to family and the poor, how to help when we can't help everyone who asks, and who the Bible instructs us to refuse. They were astonished that there is a right time to refuse and were relieved to be left with scriptures to teach others about this thorny issue.

Then Wade taught on being good stewards of family relationships. We must balance our lives in earning money and having time. Mom and dad need to be in the home training their children and this takes time. Time at home means less time at work, or choosing a different job to be able to be home and that means less money. These must be balanced. We must give time to God first, then our family, then our friends and neighbors. The balance taught in God's word is very different than the cultural balance that is taught here. Please pray as it is a difficult change.

We covered so much more and had wonderful fellowship. The members from our other church joined us at the conference and camped at the church. Several church members stepped up and worked the entire conference from prep and cleaning day to arriving early and staying late. The ladies cooked amazing meals for us. We laughed and learned and had a wonderful conference. Thank you to those praying for this time. Wade and I were able to encourage our people. He taught solid biblical principals and we got practical tools and information into their hands. We are grateful for the opportunity to minister to the people here and thank you for your partnership financially and in pray to make that possible.

With love and heartfelt appreciation,

Wade and Donna Rasmussen