



First Love Intercessor

"Since we consider and look not to the things which are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are visible are temporal (brief and fleeting), but the things that are invisible are deathless and everlasting."

II Corinthians 4:18 (The Amplified Bible)

Dear Praying Friends:

July 2008



As I write this letter to you I must say that I feel like I have been riding on a whirlwind since the beginning of the year! In a matter of just 6 months I have flown over 100,000 miles and been to some of the neediest spots on this planet. Even now I sense that my spirit is reacting...it feels as though a battle is going on inside my very being! My eyes have seen so many images that are hard to describe in words. Perhaps this is because they came to me as a result of having the opportunity to drop in on regions of the world that for centuries have been strongholds of the Enemy of the hearts and souls of anyone who honors the Name of Jesus. This Enemy is extremely cunning and in most instances remains unseen, although his presence is very evident as he wreaks havoc on the lives and societies that he touches. Because of the close encounters which I have had in Enemy territory, right now I am struggling a bit with my focus. I feel as though the Lord has allowed my eyes to be opened to the really real world of unseen things, and that He

has begun a work of closing my eyes to the mirage of the temporal things that exist in this material, three dimensional world that we call earth. I told you that I was having a hard time describing what I have been experiencing as of late, but if I were to summarize it briefly I would say that **I believe God has allowed me to catch a glimpse of the eternal.**

[Please allow me to share an entry in my personal journal which was written on February 1, 2008, while I was in Nairobi, Kenya with Linda and short-term missionary friends Dave Bodrie & Larry Voss, as I believe this will give you a bit more insight as to where I am coming from...](#)

Yesterday started out normal enough as we all got up around 6:30 am and had breakfast, group devotions, and then started to work. I had a full day planned for our small group as we were scheduled to go get Larry's kids registered at West Nairobi School, stop by Raila Educational Center to view our feeding program, do some shopping at Nakumatt, and then finish up with a late lunch at Java House before going back to work at our new children's home.

After devotions I laid out the rest of the plants that we had purchased for the gardening work that Linda and I have been doing around the duplex on our Karen property. We have been staying out here with Dave and Larry since they arrived on January 20th. At 9:45am I headed out for a short run and I promised Linda that I would be back by 10:30 so that we could all leave for West Nairobi School by 11:00.

I ran out to the new bypass road which is being constructed near our property and headed towards Kibera. This bypass was recently opened even though it is only a 2 lane dirt road at present. It's a nice place to run on since there is very little vehicle traffic and only occasional pedestrians. Since I told Linda that I would only be gone for 45 minutes, I ran out for 22 1/2 minutes and then turned around and headed back towards our Karen property. After running about 30 minutes I said, "Jambo" to a man who I had seen walking on the road earlier and then about one minute later a young man with a gun emerged from out of some tall underbrush and pointed the gun at me! And then a second man came out with a gun. The first man told me to go with them into the forest, and in order to do so I had to climb through a narrow 6 foot high wire fence. Just before I got to the fence one of the men hit me on the left side of my head with his gun. It didn't hurt much as I was still in shock from what was unfolding before me. I really didn't want to go into the forest, but I had no choice. As I was climbing through the fence a 3rd man with a gun appeared, and he shoved the man who hit me and hollered something in Swahili at him. I believe that he was upset that the other guy hit me, but I am sure that the first man just wanted to show me that they meant business.

The four of us walked about 100 feet into the forest, and then the 3rd guy, who was older than the other 2 and apparently the head man, told me to sit down on the ground beside a tree. Meanwhile the first guy showed me a bullet that he had taken from his automatic pistol and said, "See! I can kill you!"

After I sat down one of the men took my wrist watch and then he tried to pry my wedding ring off of my finger. I haven't had that ring off since I put it on over 20 years ago—which was a few months after the first armed robbery I experienced back in 1987 when we lived in Manila, Philippines. At this robbery 5 armed

and masked men had guns pointing at my head as they also took my watch and wedding ring. While the man was working on trying to take my wedding ring off, I told him and his accomplices that my wife and friends expected me back home within 15 minutes (10:30am) and if I wasn't home by then a search party would begin to look for me.

The guy trying to take off my ring was having trouble getting it over my knuckle, and I knew that it was going to take some special effort in order for him to get it off since I had tried several times over the years with no success. The thought crossed my mind that if these guys couldn't take my ring off, they might cut my finger off in order to get the ring! At that point a second man began to assist the first, and the two of them tugged and pried and even applied some of their spit in order to provide some lubrication. I was truly happy when I saw the ring slide from my left ring finger!

I told the men that they should make sure that they get at least 12,000 schillings (\$200) for the ring since the price of gold has gone up so much!

They next took off my "camel back" water bag which I wore around my waist and thoroughly searched it in the hopes of finding some money or a cell phone. I didn't have either with me, but I did have a small aerosol canister of mace (pepper spray) hanging on my belt. One of the guys undid the Velcro band and asked me what it was. I told him it was mosquito spray, so he gave it back to me. At this point I celebrated in my mind as I thought, "Maybe I can use the spray on a couple of these robbers and escape!"

Next, one of my running shoes was removed, and each of the men looked it over in the hopes that it might fit them. But I was about a foot taller than all 3 of the men, so the older guy gave the shoe back to me. I was surprised that I was permitted to put it back on my foot!

After about 30 minutes into my captivity, the older guy said, "You're bleeding." I said, "Maybe I cut myself on a plant while I was climbing through the fence." But then I remembered getting hit in the head with the gun and realized that this blow is what caused the bleeding. I took off the white running cap that I was wearing and saw quite a bit of blood on the back rim of it. One of the men took some tissue from my camel back and wiped the blood off of the side of my face and head.

As I was sitting with these 3 gunmen, they kept telling me that they wanted money. They could see that I didn't have any on me and soon checked inside my running shorts to make sure. They wanted me to call my wife and tell her to bring the money to them. I told them that I didn't have any Kenyan phone numbers memorized as I only travel to Kenya for short periods of time. I don't think they believed me, as they kept insisting during the next hour that I call my wife on their cell phone and tell her to bring money. I told them that I could go back to my home and get them some money. But they didn't like that idea as they told me that I would probably just call the police.

After about 45 minutes I noticed a 4th man who was involved in my abduction. He was the man who I had greeted on the road on 2 occasions. He was the robber's watchman, as they called him and obviously was the one who phoned the head robber to let him know when the right time was to make a "hit." This watchman knew where I was along the road and was able to time the position of his gunmen friends so that they could jump right in front of me with their guns in full view at just the right moment.

It was at this time that the head man told me that I had only 2 choices:

1. I either get them some money or
2. They would kill me.

I knew that I couldn't get them any money because I didn't know any phone numbers, so that only left option #2. And I certainly didn't like the prospects of that one!

For the next hour I truly attempted to remain calm while these men held me at gun point even though at times I wondered if this was the way I would enter into the presence of Jesus. I deliberately spent quite a bit of time carrying on a conversation with them talking about such topics as:

- What I did as a Christian with First Love in Kenya and around the world.
- How I assisted the poor in the slum with education and feeding.
- My personal contact with Raila Odinga who was the chief opposition in the recent presidential elections.

During our conversations the head man told me to turn around so that I would no longer be able to see him or the other 3 men. I turned around part way, but I didn't like the idea of not being able to see my captors, so I kept them in view with the corner of my eye. In my mind I refused to allow them to have the opportunity to shoot me in the back of the head without my first being able to see them and have a chance to run for it!

I spent a great deal of time in prayer while I was sitting under that tree. I called on God to alert me if He knew that I needed to attempt to escape. I knew that He, as the omniscient God, knew if these men were going to try to kill me, so I asked Him to speak to my heart and give me a sense of urgency if I needed to look for a way to flee. At that particular moment I didn't feel as though God was telling me to run, but I knew that at any moment He might! So, I made every effort to entrust myself to the Master's care. Meanwhile, I kept studying the forest which lay before me, looking for the best path to take in the event that I felt that I needed to spring to my feet and run for it! A few of the things that bothered me the most about the idea of trying to run from these men were:

- I knew that Kenyans are the world's fastest runners.
- I had seen that 3 of these men had guns, and knew that it would be hard for me to weave off shots from all of them.
- In order for me to escape I had to stop and climb through a 6 foot high narrow wire fence, which would take too much valuable time.

Escape appeared to be a hopeless cause. But, on the other hand, it was so difficult to sit there and wait to see how God would work. Many thoughts entered my mind...

1. I felt so badly for what Linda was going through right now.
2. Am I going to be delivered from this predicament, or is this the time when I will meet the Lord face to face?
3. I spent some time taking an inventory of my life and confessed my own sinfulness to God.
4. I wondered how the ministry would fare without me around and determined that First Love was much larger than Tom Clinton.
5. I prayed that God would speak to the hearts of my captors and that they would set me free.
6. I thought about my children, David & Angie, and about my grandchildren...
7. I kept looking for a way of escape!

At this point, the head man told me that he wanted me to help them steal a car. I figured this meant that I would be the one to flag down a car, and they would then jump out with their guns to rob the driver and steal the vehicle. I prayed that a car would come along because then I would be permitted to be back on the road, and if I could get back to the road I determined that then I would "run for it!"

For the next 30 minutes the younger man kept saying, "I want money!" And the first man kept his gun in full view.

At one point 2 of the men were over by the fence 100 feet away, and the other 2 had their guns under their shirts. I had the pepper spray in my hand, and I was so tempted to spray both of these men in the eyes, and then run for it! But I restrained myself.

Oh - it was so hard to restrain myself! I figured that if I did this and didn't get away, I would be shot for sure, so I gave up the idea.

Another time, only the younger man was guarding me, and the other 3 were over by the fence looking for victims. At this point I was so close to attempting a "Rambo-type" move of grabbing this guy, taking his gun, and then shooting my way to freedom. But, I wasn't sure if his gun even had bullets in it, and I also knew that I would probably just get myself shot!

The best course of action was to be patient - wait on the Lord and pray! But, oh, this was SO hard! About this time the head man hollered at me: "Pray your last prayer!" I didn't tell him that I already had! I just ignored his statement. Meanwhile, I looked once again into the deep forest to see if there was a clear path that I hadn't seen earlier! But all I saw was thorny weeds and dense trees in all directions! I was totally and unequivocally trapped! I prayed even harder that God would make His presence known and that these men would release me. The head man then said to me: "I believe that you are a lion. I believe that you are courageous!" I just looked at him and said, "I don't know about that!" I sure didn't feel very courageous about that time...that's for sure!

Then something amazing happened! The head man told me to get up, and as I did, I could see 5 men walking in spread out fashion way over on the opposite side of the road from where we were hiding. These 5 men looked as though they were searching for something or someone...and I thought they may be searching for me! As I stood next to the robbers I could see extreme fright in their eyes as they talked quietly in Swahili with one another! About 3 minutes later the head man said, "You can leave now! Climb through the fence and continue your jogging as you were before! Take your belongings and go!"

I must admit I couldn't believe my ears! And as I began to move away from these men, I kept thinking that they were taking aim at me, so after I got through the fence I turned to see what they were doing, but they were no where in sight! They had vanished!

By the frightened looks on the faces of these four men just prior to my release, I tend to believe that God allowed them to see His normally unseen angelic army surrounding them in much the same way as Elisha's servant, Gehazi, did when he was caught in a hopeless situation. (II Kings 6:15-17)

After getting through the fence I began to jog as fast as I could to the road, and then I headed towards home. But, I soon discovered that I was more fatigued than I had imagined and had to stop to walk after only a few minutes. But then I started my jogging again. As soon as I was able, I moved closer to the homes and farms. And within 15 minutes I was in sight of our First Love Karen property. As I rounded the last corner, I spotted Dave Bodrie, and then I was able to quicken my pace even as he began to run towards me. When Dave and I met we embraced for a few minutes with tears streaming down our cheeks, and as we walked arm and arm together towards our gate, I spotted Linda! She looked at me, and I looked at her, and we immediately sprinted towards one another. When she got to me, she broke down and bawled as though there were no tomorrow, and we hugged and kissed. The Lord had seen fit to deliver me from my enemies!

After spending the next hour greeting and thanking my friends and workers for their prayers and acts of kindness, Joseph, a police officer who is the brother of our First Love Kenya Director, took Linda and me to the Karen police station where we reported the crime and filled out an abstract of the offense.

I learned later that it was 2 of our recent high school grads, Boaz and Philip, as well as our 3 septic tank diggers, who were the 5 men which were spotted by the robbers searching for me alongside the road shortly before I was released. I firmly believe that it was their physical presence as well as God's direct intervention through His normally unseen forces which led to my release.

How I praise the Lord for this reminder of what is really important in life! In the past 5 months, He has permitted me to have a time of self-evaluation and introspection through the use of this unique "wake up call." And, He has renewed my commitment to reach out to as many as possible with the Good News of salvation in Christ alone! As a matter of fact, since this experience, I have been privileged to have the opportunity to be used of God to lead over 50 men and women from the countries of Kenya, Nepal, and the Philippines to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord! This includes an opportunity which I had just 2 days after the robbery to lead 12 of our construction workers to the Lord in Nairobi! This is what truly matters!



Here I am sharing Christ with our Kenyan workers just 2 days after the robbery. Patrick, our Chaplain, served as my interpreter.

Linda and I have just returned from another ministry trip to Kenya along with 10 other men and women from the USA. The primary purpose of this trip was to minister to the children who come from the Kibera and Mitumba slums with Kids Klubs. The theme for this year's Kids Klub ministry was the life of Joseph. As I listened to Linda discuss each lesson with her staff I couldn't help but think about a bottom-line conclusion which came to Joseph when he confronted his brothers after he revealed himself to them in Egypt,

because this is also how I look at the life-threatening experience which I had in Nairobi on January 31st. Joseph gave this response to his brothers as recorded in Genesis 50:20...

You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

The Enemy also obviously intended to "harm me," but God has used this otherwise very negative experience to bring about good... "the saving of many lives!" **To God be the glory!**

Thanks so much for your prayers for our safety! I know that at certain times we cash in on many of them! I love you!

Your missionary to the least of these,

Tom

Tom Clinton (for Linda too!)



First Love International Ministries P.O. Box 15836 • Loves Park, IL 61132-5836
Email: firstloveinternational@comcast.net • Website: www.firstloveinternational.com

Printing Donated by Southern Imperial, Inc.



*A higher standard.
A higher purpose.*