

Charles and Sarah West Newsletter

November 2011

“This Week I Learned a New Word”



Dear Friends,

This week I learned a new word! It came through a phone conversation with one of the women who attend the Saturday Bible study I lead in a very poor compound. This compound is located in an urban area of the capitol city of Lusaka, Zambia. I was at the Bible Study on Saturday but she had not attended -- that wasn't unusual because the women attend sporadically. She called me on Tuesday morning to tell me that her 9-month-old baby had just been buried. She was calling to give me the funeral details!

I mustered up enough courage to ask her, “What happened, how did your 9-month-old baby die?” She said the doctor told her it was “kwashoka”. I turned to a young lady, a Zambian national who was sitting next to me and repeated the word to her because I had never heard it before. She repeated the word with a different pronunciation and began to explain it to me. I sat amazed at what I was hearing. I am very familiar with malnutrition and the children of Zambia dying from it, but this word was new!

The mother said her baby had suffered from diarrhea, vomiting, and several other symptoms that sounded like the symptoms of malnutrition. I typed the word into Google, and it came up in Wikipedia as “Kwashiorkor.”

I read the symptoms and looked at the pictures of the children represented online. What an awful way to die and to think, “It is preventable”.

The name is derived from the “Ga” language of coastal Ghana; translated as “the sickness the baby gets when the new baby comes.” Apparently, this is quite common in several countries!

In this young mother's case, this was her last born child as she has several young children at home. Like many women in Zambia, she is having great difficulty feeding and caring for her children. New statistics just out indicates Zambia is still one of the poorest countries in Africa with 60 percent of the population living in poverty; and 42 percent, living in extreme poverty.

Why are we bringing this up at Thanksgiving time, the time of year where we, as Christians and as a nation, give thanks for all of God's bountiful blessings? Our national Thanksgiving holiday is a time of celebration with family and friends



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gathered for great meals. It is for precisely that reason -- this time of gathering in a nice home, with great food which reminds us that the New Testament book of James tells us to look after the poor, the orphans, and widows. Even though most people in the states (particularly at Thanksgiving time) are surrounded by an abundance of food, there are those we see around us living in abject poverty every day. We are reminded anew that so many people lack the basic daily necessities such as shelter, clothing, and more importantly, food.

We pray that you have a wonderful Thanksgiving, but as we approach that most sacred of seasons, Christmas, when we celebrate the birth of Christ, we must remember that Jesus was an extreme advocate for the poor. We, as the church, the hands and feet, the eyes, and ears of Christ present in the world, are to also be advocates for the poor.

If you are looking for that special Christmas gift to give, that gift that will make a world of difference, then we ask that you consider and pray about donating to help keep us on the field in Zambia, as well as giving financial and material gifts for the projects we are involved in -- projects that provide theological education and works to train pastors to bring the good news of Christ to this nation; and projects that work with children and the vulnerable to address education, feeding and medical needs.

May God richly bless you for all that you do and we pray you have a great Thanksgiving!!

Charles and Sarah West

MPT website: www.westinzambia.org