

# Mozambique

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*Matt 28:19-20 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things. . . NKJV"*

## **Rookie to Veteran by Justin Owen**

I laugh at my own jokes frequently. This is something my grandpa taught me to do since I was a little boy. I wrote the title to this article and laughed a little. I don't want people to get the wrong impression right off the bat. I don't count myself an expert on my topic today, but by the time I had accomplished the task that was at hand...I sure was proud of myself. I had heard about people's experience "out in the bush" before and wondered what it would be like. Living without electricity and running water is challenging. Without those 2 things for more than a day or two, most people in America feel that a state of emergency should be broadcast. The challenge was before me but I felt that I would do fine. After all, Duane was going to be right there by my side. I put out of my mind the difficulty we might face by going out into the bush. We picked Duane up at the airport and began the journey to Milange, Mozambique.

## **Milange, Mozambique**

As our first Sunday in Milange came and passed, we realized that the trip to Mbesa 1 (the first Bush Town Congregation we would visit) may have to be canceled. The truck would not be ready in time to go to Mbesa, and since it was only a two-day meeting, canceling this meeting was certainly a possibility. I was disappointed over this because I was really excited to see the bush town of Mbesa. A few men had traveled from Mbesa to where we stayed in Milange. They had caught word that we may not be able to make it, so they traveled a great distance either by motorcycle transport or by bike to come and plead with us to have the meeting. I asked Duane what he thought about us splitting up. If I went to the meeting and he went to get tires, we both could be helpful and effective. What in the world was I saying? I guess I was feeling brave at the time! He agreed, but he said it would be best for him to go and help get things set up. So...off we went into the wild!

## **Setting Camp at Mbesa Village**

As we drove to Mbesa, one of the first things I noticed was the beauty all around. Even in Milange there were some concrete houses and decent sized buildings. But here it was elephant grass and branch homes. The road all but disappeared beneath us as we made our way further and further out. Finally we arrived at the "prayer house." It's what we would call a church building! All of the people were so excited to see us there. We began to make camp just at the side of the church building. As we got tarps out and began to setup tents, we had no shortage of helpers. Everyone was quick to get in and unload. Then the help slowed down, but not for lack of desire or effort! I doubt if these people had ever seen a tent before! We got it up though with little trouble. I got inside the tent and began to blow up the air mattresses that Duane and I would be sleeping on. I had been so focused on my duties inside the tent that I didn't notice an audience had formed! Somewhere near 20 children had gathered around the tent to see what in the world I was doing. I got my phone out and started taking a video so I could capture the moment. The kids were so impressed with all that was going on. When I showed them the video of themselves my crowd almost instantly doubled. I finished my duties in the tent and shortly after they called us for dinner.

## **Dinner in the Bush**

I had no idea what to expect for dinner in the bush. Duane had already given me some warning about eating out there. I was probably more dumb than brave, but I went ahead and ate with the Mbesa people each time they offered to feed me. That night's meal was nearly the same as every meal we had there. Chicken! It was really good! I remembered thinking to myself, "The people out here in the bush may cook better than the restaurant at the hotel!"

## **Surrounded by the Brethren**

That night Duane and I were camped under a canopy of stars like you only see when you're in the mountains. It would've been really peaceful to take in...if we didn't have some Africans put their benches and mats literally right on top of our tent! Duane and I laughed about it for a bit. Here we were in the middle of all this open space and they all decided to sleep right on top of us! I guess it was sweet in a way. They surrounded us and took us into their world for a brief moment.

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## Duane Falls Over People and the Stump

That night I had the best laugh of my entire trip. Duane needed to get up to use the chimbudzi (hole in the ground representing a toilet). It was certainly dark out there. The stars were bright, but there's a reason God calls them the lesser lights! As Duane got out of the tent and started heading that way he stepped on one of the Africans that had decided to build camp right on top of us. As he recoiled trying to spare the young man's life, he stumbled over a large stump and fell all the way over! Duane is no small man, and I imagine that is the closest I will ever come to knowing how David felled Goliath! I couldn't contain my laughter. I felt bad for a moment because I hadn't checked on him to be sure he was okay, but I really couldn't help myself. Here we were, just cutting up about these men right on top of our tent talking all night long, and then this happens.

## Time of Separation

Well, the next morning Duane was fine...and then he was gone. He was the only person who spoke English well. Brother Kusamale would be able to communicate with me, but it's not the same as having another American brother there. We began the meeting and it was wonderful. I will share that experience with you in another article, if you care to read it. Several people responded to the truth that day. Many came forward asking forgiveness for living wrong. The sweet spirit of the people of Mbesa overwhelmed me. They were so happy to see us! It was amazing to go to a place that had so little, and see them so happy. It makes me wonder if we would have a different outlook on life if we had less as well. By the time Duane had returned to Mbesa, I had accomplished a great feat in my own eyes. I learned how the people of the bush lived. I hadn't just stayed the night, I acted as though I were living there. Before anyone goes getting too upset...I know staying a few nights is not like living there! But I had done everything that a person would need to do out there to live. Pardon the graphic nature of this...but I learned to use a hole in the ground as a toilet. I learned how to bathe without running water. I learned how the people cooked for us without stoves and microwaves. I learned how life may have been before all the "stuff" came in and made our lives "simpler." In those few days I like to tell Lori I went from being a Bush Rookie to a Bush Veteran! I learned to live like our brethren in Mbesa!

## Greatest Experience

There is one experience in Mbesa I wouldn't trade for any earthly possession. The first night in Mbesa that I was on my own, I gathered myself together in the tent. It was already pretty dark outside. People had come that day in greater numbers than I anticipated. We ended up seating people just outside the building within earshot. Not a one had a place to stay because they were miles from their home with no transport. I hadn't even thought about the lack of hotels or places to sleep. As the night grew darker they brought all of the motorcycles into the church building. They carried all of the chickens inside as well. They pushed all of the benches out of the way, laid down their sleeping mats, and several people rested from the long day. But most of them began to sing together. The singing was led by the children at times, which if you haven't heard, you're missing something more special than you'll ever know. As I lay in my tent that night, getting ready to sleep, they began to sing. I couldn't stay in my tent for very long. It was wonderful. It was as if they had nothing better to do than to sing praises to God. If only we could learn that lesson. We truly have nothing better to do ourselves either. In the midst of chasing down kids' activities and work and everything else in life that busies our time, worship to God stands alone as something that truly counts. I thank God for the lesson He gave me that night. Those sweet, sincere people gave me something I cannot repay. Zi Como quam biri, Mbesa! (Thank you very much, Mbesa!) Justin

## Conclusion from Duane Permenter

It was a delight to have Justin with me and the Lord willing he will be making more trips. I hope you enjoyed his report. He wrote a pretty long one; nevertheless, I did not want to delete anything. I left it as he wrote it. He is a real trooper and I praise God for young men like him who are willing to serve in this capacity. We need more like him and please pray that God will send forth laborers to assist in the work. Once again, I thank all concerned for allowing me to serve in Mozambique and it is an honor to write about the work. God bless all!

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