

Sunday School - Brooke Seekins, Missionary from Malawi

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[0 : 00] It was in the States since then, but that was when COVID hit. I was just getting ready to set up something, and then COVID shut everybody down. And even though I was in Michigan speaking at a college and a church, and all of a sudden they said, nope, we're shutting down today, and it was Friday.

And it's like, well, I'm supposed to speak Sunday. Why don't you just show up and we'll figure something out online? And that became my life for a few months. And then the borders in Malawi were closed.

And so instead of going back in June of 2020, I was stuck in America until November. And different things, you know, even in Malawi, there was lockdown.

Even when I left in June, this past year there was masks still in place and certain travel restrictions for borders and all of that. So COVID has made life interesting the whole world.

I've never seen anything affect the entire world such as COVID other than the gospel. Maybe, right? Nothing else has really affected every single country in the whole world.

[1 : 05] But I'm not going to talk much more about that because we're kind of past the worst part. But I just want to give you guys a glimpse of one area that we work with in Malawi, just so you can see kind of a behind-the-scenes look at one aspect of the ministry.

And I'm not going to tell you everything I do until the main morning service where everybody will be here. I will tell you that I went to Africa first in 2001. 9-11, I was in London on my way there the first time.

I was in Tanzania until 2017. And then now I've been in Malawi since 2018. Still with Grace Ministries International. Some of the ministries I did, I'm still doing.

And my main focus is youth ministries over there and training youth leaders. So that's the only thing I'm going to tell you about what I normally do. Now I want to show you just one aspect that I don't get to share with very many churches.

Some churches I get double time, some churches I only get 15 minutes. But you guys are my last church for this time back. I'm heading back in one month to Malawi. And I've been here since July.

[2 : 15] I was talking to the pastor. My folks, it's coming up on their 50th wedding anniversary. And so we were all in Alaska for a month because my grandparents lived there. My dad lived there as a kid.

And so we got to play tourists and be all together for the month of July up there. And so I've been speaking since September in churches, mostly in the Northwest. And you guys are the last church I get to speak to.

So if you have questions along the way, go ahead and raise your hand. I might tell you, just wait, because I'm getting there. But I might answer them. So please feel free to ask for sure. But I want to talk to you about how we raise leaders and the principles of raising leaders.

Because missions is never just about sharing the gospel. Church is never just about sharing the gospel, right? Is that true, elders and pastors?

You want leaders. We all want leaders for the future. And what does that look like? Well, it looks a little different for different people.

[3 : 17] So this is, can you guys read that one? It's a chart. I don't even have this chart in English.

I have it in Swahili and in Chichewa. I'm not fluent in Chichewa. I'm about 60%. That's something I'm working on. But I'll walk you through this here shortly. But this is the vision that we have in our youth ministry program in Malawi.

And this is one of the things I use when I train leaders. But I think it's applicable not just for youth leaders. I think it's applicable for all of us. And so what we do is we, first of all, we talk about the gospel.

And that's what this is. A Christu. Someone becoming a Christian. Okay? So this chart is only applicable for someone who's already a Christian.

If you're not a Christian, sorry, you're not even on this chart yet. But I'm going to assume from now on that all of you guys are Christians. And so the first part we always talk about is when somebody's a Christian, what do you see there?

[4 : 24] They're just a little sprout. Just a little seedling. Just starting out. I don't know if you're familiar with the greenhouses that have, but we often, certain vegetables, you would buy at the grocery store or something come May, right?

You would buy your, probably your peppers and your tomatoes. You don't start them from seeds because they take too long. Somebody else has already started them from seeds in a very warm environment so that you can get them ready to plant when your weather is warmer.

That's how we live in North America where we have winters. In Africa it doesn't matter because it's warm enough most of the time. So when somebody is a Christian, they're just this little sprout.

And we don't want to leave them there, do we? We do not want to leave everybody just as seedlings in that greenhouse.

We want them to grow up. And so after they're a Christian, we put them on this cycle. And do you see this picture? This is a student of the word and of Christ.

[5 : 32] Another word people call this is discipleship, depending on the language you would use. But a student, that's what disciple means, a student. A student of the word and a student of Christ.

When, after we become Christians, what happens? When we move into that next stage where we start becoming a student. And most of us are in that stage for a long, long time.

And what do you see about that picture there? It has support. This is mostly what the local church should be doing.

Or older Christians with newer Christians, right? This is the cycle of a Christian growing. You cannot grow alone and be strong.

You may think you can grow alone. But you've got to have that support system of your local church. Of somebody who's stronger in their faith helping you to keep you straight.

[6 : 35] Because without that support system tied to that tree, what happens when the wind blows? Now, he may keep growing, but he might be growing at an ankle or crooked or something like that.

I've seen people make really cool walking sticks. You know what they do? They wrap that wire around that young sapling. And then as it grows, it gets these really cool grooves in it. And they sand it down and make these awesome walking sticks.

So whatever is attached to that young one, it affects the rest of their life. When someone becomes a Christian, whatever pastor, local church, or mentor, or discipler, whatever you want to call that person, whoever is with them will affect their faith for the rest of their life.

And we have to be careful about that. Because sometimes we don't realize that we're that stick. Right? Sometimes we think, oh, yeah, yeah, I'm just doing this.

But you don't realize that you're a stick for somebody else. And sometimes you can cause them to go crooked. Or cause them to go at an angle. Or be deformed in their faith. Sometimes for a long time.

[7 : 45] And so when we're working with youth who are anywhere between 13 and 30, give or take, we want them to be in a system where there's somebody stronger helping them grow.

And that's where we all stay for a long time. Because it takes a while to grow. Right? A tree takes a while until its roots get bigger. Until it gets enough leaves that it can feed itself and grow.

But after that, they come over here. What do you see about that tree? The roots. You see that root? The roots are really important. But it's also strong.

It's getting fatter. Right? It's okimwa di ochita utumiki. That means they're firm or established. And they're starting to do some ministry.

Who's my sound man over here? You see, we want them to start doing some ministries. Not all ministry. But everybody should be doing some ministries.

[8 : 46] That's part of the faith. Part of being a Christian is growing so that you can serve other people in the church and outside the church. And so this would be the next stage. When they start

doing ministries in Africa, that often looks like singing in the choir.

Helping maybe the pastor in his field. And doing some of the jobs in church, like cleaning and some of those things. So simple jobs that everybody can do. But that's part of the faith. Realizing that this is necessary for the church.

And then what do you see for the next one? Yeah, there's fruit. Ogawo tengo abuwino means they start to share the gospel. They start to bear fruit.

Now sharing the gospel isn't the only way to bear fruit. But obviously it's a huge way. When they reach a place where they start to do ministry, we start to prepare them to bear more fruit.

And to go out beyond their local church, beyond their local community. How can they reach people that are not saved? How can we reach our community? How can we? And when they start to bear fruit.

[9 : 48] And you see how deep those roots are. Why? Because when Ephesians talks about every wind of doctrine, right? When your roots are really deep, a tornado can go by.

You're still going to stand, right? You guys ever been in tornadoes? You guys get them out here a lot, right? My dad's cousin was, I think it was Wisconsin. They had a tornado come through on their wedding day.

They were using an old farm that was kind of ready for the wedding. And I wasn't there, but we saw a lot of pictures. My great-grandparents were there. And right after the ceremony, right before the reception, tornado warning came through.

And they said they threw great-grandma down the hay chute. Because they got all to the basement of the barn. And what I remember them talking about, they said, really, there wasn't that much damage because they were kind of on the edge.

But they had to be careful. But when they came up, there was straw sticking into the tree. A couple cars got minimal damage.

[10 : 49] And, you know, tents blew over. But nobody was hurt. Nothing major damage. But the power that can stick a piece of straw hay into a tree, as if it's a knife, is amazing.

But the tree was still living. It had scars. It could withstand that storm. But that tree was big enough. But a little tiny sapling like this would not last. And we can't have Christians at this stage forever. We can't have them at this stage forever. We need people that are strong enough to withstand the storms, withstand the winds. Even when those attacks come from crazy storms, they can stand firm.

They might get wounded, but they're still standing firm. And then the next one, what do you see here? New growth.

Yeah, this word is atsogoreri. They become a leader. So they're no longer just producing fruit, but they're also getting ready to help with the process. Right? And so this has been the vision.

[11 : 51] I taught this in Tanzania for years to leaders who would train leaders. And then we brought it over into Chichewa, and we tweaked it a little bit to fit their culture. And at one of the seminars I was doing a couple years ago, one of the guys was like, well, you forgot, and I didn't have this arrow.

He said, you need to put an arrow there. I said, you're right. So we had to change the chart. Why? He said, because when I'm a leader, I become a sapling in my leadership.

He said, I can stand on my own, but as a leader, I go through the whole process again. And he was right. Because when you become a leader, you need someone to help you, support you in this new stage of growth, this new stage of ministry.

And so as we discussed, we said, this circle never ends. We're always learning something, growing in our faith, learning how to do new ministries, learning taking new positions or ministry jobs in the church, and we need help.

And then we start to figure it out and figure it out, and then we become a leader, and we can train somebody to do that. And then we take on something new, and we need help. And then pretty quick, we can train somebody to do that.

[13 : 05] And this is the ever-ending cycle of ministry and church growth and Christians in their maturity. Is that true? And so this is part of the vision that we have.

We train youth leaders, hey, guys, it's not just about having fun or singing in the choir, but it's about helping the youth of the church go through this cycle. Now, in Malawi, I think the average lifespan is about 45, 50.

Some of that's affected in the past by AIDS was really prominent in the early 2000s, so there's not a lot of older people. The youth are the strength of the church.

More than 50% of the population is under the age of 15 and 18, depending on what part. So the youth are a big chunk of the church. They're going to be doing ministries, but we also have to have people who have some training, who have Bible knowledge, and they're going to help them do it well, because they're excited to do it.

They want to do it. They want to make changes, and that's typical to youth, right? We all, this is how we're going to do it. I don't let, you know. That's okay as long as you've given them good guidance and let them learn how to do that.

[14:08] And so that's a big thing that we do, but then here's the next part. Papaya trees. You guys have seen a papaya in the store?

You ever seen a papaya? How big are they? No, that's not a real papaya. No. Papayas get about like this or like this. Yeah, they do sometimes in America.

They bring little ones, but that's not normal. In a tropical environment, papayas get like average papayas like this. Where I live, Southeast Asia, they can even get this big.

There's several varieties. Okay. Papaya are really good for your health. They have natural enzymes. They help stomach ailments. You can even use them as meat tenderizer.

They don't taste that good in my personal opinion. They're okay with lemon on them. But they're really good for you. We used to dry the seeds and use them for stomach ailments along the way.

Okay. But this is a papaya tree.

[15:06] They start from a seed. They grow very rapidly. The fruit produce at the end of the first year. You can start getting some papayas on that tree. They tend to grow 16 to 20 feet tall.

Now, there are ways that farmers have learned to shorten them just so they can harvest better. But the natural is to be really tall. Okay. And they get those. You can see big fruit up there.

Now, that one's not a year old. That's probably two or three years old where it gets a ton of fruit.

That's a lot of fruit, right? It's big. It's healthy. And another unique thing about papayas is they actually have gender.

One of the rare plants, what did they say? Hermaphrodite or something like that. You have to have a male tree in your grove to reproduce.

It's a unique. And so, of course, old legends have different things. Well, if you tie a red string around, it'll make it male when it's only two days old. They do all these, you know, old wives' tales that people do to make sure they can, which never works.

[16:16] But they still teach their grandchildren that thing. But it's a big, beautiful fruit. And then you have a mango tree. You see the mango tree here?

I've done this before. This is not, I took the picture off the internet. But I've done this before where we've had 50, 60 kids under a mango tree. Mango trees are a lot different, though.

They're actually in the cashew family. So if somebody has a cashew allergy, you have to be careful eating mangoes sometimes. A mango tree can reach 50 to 60 feet tall.

And you never even get fruit for the first five to eight years. Mangoes, average mangoes like this.

Some can get bigger, some smaller. But the average mango tree is like this, okay?

So it takes a long time to produce fruit. But what I forgot to tell you about the papaya, or maybe I just wanted to wait. The papaya, remember how long it takes for it to produce fruit?

[17:18] First year. First year. By year five, six, you cut it down. It's pretty much done. It can go seven, eight years, but it'll get very few fruit after five years.

But its fruits are big, beautiful, right? Five, six, seven years, you're going to cut it down. The wood in a papaya tree is very fibrous. Not even good for firewood.

They might cut them down and use them as temporary fencing to keep goats out of their corn when they harvest. I've been at a camp, we use them for a temporary volleyball med. You know, a one-time thing.

Because they're so fibrous, they're not worth even burning or using in building. That's long-term.

The mango tree doesn't even start producing until when? Right?

Okay. It takes a long time. Mango tree would be more like an oak tree. It's a hard wood. A mango tree can produce for 70, 80, even 100 years. It takes a long time to grow.

[18:24] Think of an oak tree. You know, it takes a long time to grow. Even though it produces that five years, it's not going to have very much. But grandparents leave their children mango trees. You

can even sell the land, but the mango tree belongs to somebody.

One of my coworkers in Tanzania, somebody owed him a lot of money. He lent him money for a hospital bill. And he said, no, you need to start paying it back. And the guy said, here, I'll give you a mango tree.

The land somebody else owned, but he owned the mango tree. And so he would always bring us gunny sacks full of mangoes. Hey, you want some mangoes? You know, I got a bunch of mangoes, right? You sell them for a penny each. So many mangoes.

And they can really harvest it and use that as an extra source of income. When the tree gets big enough and old enough, they cut it down and they do a dugout canoe for Lake Malawi, which is 30% of Malawi is a lake.

One of the deeper lakes in the world. A single canoe is made out of one big mango tree. That canoe can last 20, 30 years. Now, they mend it. They melt plastic buckets to mend leaks and things like that.

[19 : 31] So they're never all wood. They always have these plastic mending on them and stuff. But that wood is super useful. And they're almost always this high.

It's not because people trim them, but because the goats stand on their hind legs. And that's as high as the average goat reaches to trim the leaves. And so they all end up kind of being cut off about that high.

And in villages, there's always village meetings under the mango tree. Everybody, oh, yeah, we're going to so-and-so's mango tree. We're going to have this family council meeting.

We're going to this. It's very typical in the places where mangoes grow. Prolific. Now, why am I telling you this? Remember how we talked about the youth being fruit trees or Christians being trees?

I would rather you be a mango tree. Even though the fruit is, you know, it's like an orange and a half. Not even as big as a grapefruit, right? But how long does it produce?

[20 : 32] 70, 80, 90, 100 years. But it takes a while before it starts producing. Whereas the papaya tree looks good, produces really quickly.

And then it's gone. This is very typical with Christians and churches, is it not? We see people, young, old, doesn't matter.

They come to Christ. They're on fire. Look at them. And they look like they're producing these big, beautiful fruit so quickly. And we're all encouraged. And then after a few years, what happens?

They fizzle. And sometimes we empower them with too much early on because we think they're strong and beautiful and we give them big responsibilities and it's too much for them to handle because we never supported them as a stick long enough.

And so when the winds of doctrine blow and the difficulties of life blow, they're done. They're moving on. And so I often tell the leaders in Avogadro because it's really crazy, especially young people, they always get on fire for the Lord.

[21 : 46] We don't want a pious. We want mango skies. And what does that mean? It may mean that it takes longer to ground them, to let them grow their roots, to support them.

We have to be more patient. We have to teach them longer. But what are the end results? A tree, a church, a church member who can continue on that cycle over and over and over and over again, right?

And so this is what I'm teaching my leaders in Africa, but I think it also applies to us. Is that not true? You got some Bible verses that can back me up there?

Of course, Ephesians 4 always talks about the winds of doctrine blowing people to and fro, right? And it talks about why we have pastors and teachers and the apostles and all of those to establish and to train.

What does it say in Ephesians 4? 13? Train whom? Who does the work of the ministry? The church, the body of Christ is supposed to do the work of the ministry.

[23 : 01] The pastor, the teachers, the elders, they're training the other people to do the work of the ministry. They're not the ones doing the work. I mean, of course they are, but Ephesians tells us to train others to teach them how to do the work of the ministry.

And you can go on and on in Ephesians speaking the truth in love so that we all grow up into mature, united. The word unity is in there too, which is the hardest word.

All of Ephesians 4 is about unity. Is that not true? And so here's, I'm just going to show you a couple people that I work with in Malawi and there's many more. This guy, his name is Chifundo Nkoma. His name means mercy in Chichewa, but it's a masculine name usually. Chifundo Nkoma. He's a young husband and father. He got married really young probably because his wife was pregnant or something like that.

And he speaks pretty good English and he's one of those guys that's really excitable. You know how some people are just energy all the time? And so he was always, I think what happened in the beginning is people thought he was a papaya and they were confused.

[24 : 10] And so they kind of made a melder early on and he crashed and burnt. That was before I met him. I didn't meet him until later. And he moved away kind of hiding shame, went back to his home village for a while and then he came back to town when I was just starting some of the youth ministries and the pastor's like, I want you to work with this guy but we're going to be more slow with him this time.

And he started taking Bible school classes which a lot of my coworkers are teaching and Bible school training leaders and now he's an elder in the church. He's in his second year of our Bible school training and he's been helping me out with youth ministry program in that local church. It's in the city suburbs so that's the one I go to often Sunday afternoon. I leave my house around one and drive to pick up some of the teachers who all live, because in the city people live spread out more.

Pick up people, pick up people, pick up instruments. We get there, it takes an hour, hour and a half to pick up instruments and people and we get to the church and then we spend a lot of time teaching them keyboard and guitar for a while and then we start a Bible study.

And Enkoma is one of the teachers of the Bible school study. I rarely teach, I sit there and listen and encourage them, helps my teacher. But he does a great job and I look at when he first started and now where he is and the insights he's drawing just from even Bible stories about Moses and Joshua and like, oh this also teaches us about this and this.

[25 : 37] Not only learning the Bible but also learning the principles of Christian growth and so this past year we pulled him in to be a conference teacher for youth and he did a great job teaching youth conference but I know because of his Bible school training and the time I've worked with him he's also trying to keep things solid and trying to not just have fun but also ground the kids in the word of God.

So pray for Enkoma. I'm sorry, you can call him mercy if that helps you in your mind because he's a young guy he wants to be a, he's a brick layer by trade and it's a hard job because it's seasonal work and so he and his wife sometimes live in half built houses while he helps finish them for people and like a year and a half ago somebody broke in because there are no bars or glass on the window yet and stole all their clothes and when you're already only making 20, 30 bucks a month and they steal all your clothes that's tough so I, his wife's actually a bigger lady and I was able to give her a lot of my older clothes and they fit her and that was really nice you know but just pray for him pray that he can be the dad and the, and the, the husband he needs to be but also in his spiritual growth.

Mark is another guy that, that works with Enkoma in that local church. He just finished in July plumbing school which he's lucky he had some relatives he's an orphan but his older brothers helped sponsor him through school and he's also going through Bible school.

What they do in the city is every Saturday morning they do Bible school classes so you don't have to be this full-time student and leave your family and home and you can make a living and then take Saturday mornings off and have classes so it takes, we can't just say the first year, second year, we, even though the curriculum is divided it takes much longer to finish a year worth of Bible school courses but he's also in that, he's leading the youth group and he has some other ministries and other talents he's a good Sunday school teacher for younger kids but he's also growing you know, now that he's finished school he's going to try and figure out how to make a living even though we're in the capital city of a million people it's hard to get your foot in the door.

If you don't have a relative you don't know somebody you can't always get a job and there's a lot of young people trying to get their foot in the door but if they don't have the right connections or the right people they can't get those jobs that make a living so he's working he gets leads he was hired by somebody had a promising job and then his boss never got paid by the contractor and the kid's like you know, I can only go so long even though I'm learning I like working for my boss if my boss

doesn't get paid he can't pay me and it was a contract to build houses for policemen you know, I mean it was it sounded like an ideal job but his boss never got paid because the higher up guy ate money so pray for Mark and other kids like him who are trying to figure out how do you make a living there's jobs to be had all over in America in Malawi there's not and so even with an education you can't always get a job but he's growing he's learning and once he kind of figures out his job then he'll find a wife so he's kind of at that stage where life choices are being made that will direct him wherever he goes but he would be a great asset in ministry wherever he goes but there's some big choices he has coming up so also pray these are my leaders

[29 : 04] I trained and they did some conferences while I was gone there's Nkoma right there but pray that we can have leaders because without leaders ministry fails so I have a lot of sprouts in Malawi remember that first chart but I don't have a lot of sticks to support them and in fact to be honest we've stopped doing some church planting and some evangelism because we don't have enough sticks to support all the sprouts it's really easy to share the gospel really easy to show videos and get people to raise their hand but when it takes a long time like I said to raise a leader it takes more than a year to do one year of Bible school study so it takes a while to grow up those leaders and weed through them because some of them are papayas and they won't last long and it takes a few years to figure out okay this one's going to be that leader this one's going to be strong and he'll be a support for those new sprouts coming up so pray that we can have leaders that are faithful that are grounded that are teachable and that are humble those are some of my biggest prayer requests that I have and I could go on and on guys but I think you have some questions right you guys are kind of quiet you're sleeping on me yes did you know that mango is the most eaten fruit in the world

I would imagine partially because those trees are so big that once they produce they really yeah I used to work in the minor produce yeah and we had to learn that for a test really I always thought it was a banana oh but mango fruit is the most eaten yeah there's many varieties some like this some small so even when this one the season's over the other one we have some areas of Malawi that are there's one one area that's almost all Muslim the tribe is a Muslim tribe and we have a couple that I work with their last name is actually mango it's kind of funny I tell them I'm not creating this about you guys it just happens to overlap but they're working specifically with this Muslim tribe and the youth are kind of tired because it's tribal and so their tradition for a hundred years I believe back from slave trading some of the slave traders made a deal with their chief and that chief said okay we'll become Muslims if you don't take our people and so it kind of protected these people of making them Muslim well they wove their own traditional beliefs with Islam and they're a very strong Muslim tribe but it's all traditional they don't educate their girls they do a lot of initiation rites when kids hit puberty but there's a lot of other traditions that are mixed with it and the youth are coming up and they're not liking how mom and dad are raising them mom and dad are poor when droughts come when floods come there's no food to eat except for mangoes and we've gotten letters from them saying hey guys do we have some money to donate our people literally are out of corn they're out of they can buy a little bit of fish there is no flour of any sort they can eat for their staple except for mangoes and part of that is because the parents don't have education they don't know some modern farming techniques and so that's what my co-worker is specializing he's building trade schools and things on there to teach them modern ways ways that kids can do sewing and better farming and along with discipleship classes to get them out of that rut and the youth are eating it up they're like yes we need a new way of living we can't live like mom and dad who are so poor we need and so they're actually drawn to the gospel through those everyday things but it takes a while because they have to unlearn all the old traditions and all the old teachings and if you've ever met anybody working with Muslims you will know that if you say

God to them or you say Adam and Eve their definition and their understanding of those stories is different than our understanding so one of the first things they do is they bring them through this program a discipleship type program that unlearns a lot of things and reteaches some basics of the Bible like who are Adam and Eve and what is the real creation story and what is the real story about Abraham he didn't offer Ishmael as a sacrifice it was Isaac and they have to unlearn things even the word spirit and the word God all of those have different meanings and so they have to erase all those meanings and then start to teach them new and so that's a very unique ministry that one of my team members is specifically focused on but yeah many times he's like yep we're in the month where everybody only has mangoes to eat right now so yeah yes sir how much persecution goes

on there or is there any persecution of the Christians you want to say it again so everybody hears how much persecution goes on or is there a persecution of Christians so that one tribe now we have 20 some tribes in Malawi more than 20 tribes so this is only one specific tribe that's in let's see Malawi's about the size of Ohio give or take but 30% of it is a lake okay and then if you have 20 tribes some tribes are smaller this is one of the larger tribes so that would be maybe four or five counties worth would be that tribe if I could say in your terms so that area there is some persecution not a lot David Livingston went through Malawi so there's a lot of Presbyterian churches in Malawi there's also a lot of Catholic churches from way back in the day when they started doing education and anti-slave trade things but like the gospel isn't always shared well but there is an influence of churches but recently they burned down a Catholic church in that area of Malawi why because the priest was trying to stop some of the initiation rites that the Muslim people had because they're not good but he wasn't going about it working with local leaders and so people were disrespected we've had a few high up

[35 : 43] Muslim people in their local mosques come to Christ and one of them in particular they were going to try and do something burn his house maybe kill him and so my co-worker evacuated him secretly to another part of the country I don't even know where I just know that we had a quick meeting saying yeah we're going to fund that from our mission organization we're going to fund the transfer of this guy to keep him safe but that's minimal it's minimal in that area the rest of the area mostly either indigenous or they say Christian but they don't know the gospel biggest problem probably over there is the prosperity gospel comes through so anybody if they're entertaining enough can become a bishop and they start preaching and they record themselves and pass it around and they entertain people and if you promise wealth to poor people you know what they follow you and they might stop drinking and stop gambling so they're going to make more money than they used to so they think that by following you they're getting rich well it's just because they stop certain bad habits but that bishop gets really rich there's one famous bishop in Malawi right now he owns like three or four airplanes and he was preaching in

South Africa and they caught him in tax fraud so he fled to Malawi but everybody knows about him but yeah so that's a big problem over there they don't have a reading culture they didn't grow up reading very much even though bibles are somewhat available it's not part of their culture to read and so they don't discern if you don't read your bible how are you going to know the truth it's got to come verbally and so we're trying to teach them yes reading your bible is important but you also have to have that verbal communication and so they follow every wind of doctrine very easily they follow every wind of doctrine and that takes a long time to erase that type of thing we are a reading culture we will hear something and check it out they're not a reading culture they hear something hey that sounds good let's try that that's entertaining let's go so there is some persecution in that one area but not not horrible yeah more questions you guys got it all down yeah maybe you're going to mention this in the next service but what's the organization

GMI organization in Malawi look like okay so Grace Ministries International is one of the grace missionary sending organization based out of Grand Rapids Michigan I work with a team we are six families counting I'm a family even though I'm single we're six families working over there yeah I will mention it but I'm fine mentioning it again because hearing it once is not enough usually each of us kind of has our own area of ministry I'm focused specifically on youth somebody else might be children's ministry somebody else church planting the one family is focused specifically in that Muslim area a couple of the guys are tag teaming with Bible school trying to develop all the curriculum and how to teach in the Bible school in that program somebody else is involved with some computer training some are involved in what do you call it like community development programs where they're teaching women new tools so they can run their own businesses and help support their husbands each of us kind of has our area

I mean we work as a team but each of us has our focus on that team yeah yeah right now we have almost 30 churches it's a little bit hard to pinpoint when somebody becomes a church and they're not just a preaching point or like just a home Bible study so it's about 30 churches mostly in the central and southern region we're not very much in the north right now but yeah it's like I said we don't have quite enough national leaders right now so the guys that I often work with are also working with somebody else until we can train more so I was kind of happy to find somebody like Nkoma or that Mercy guy because he's not yet working with somebody else yet because he's still kind of new but my main director is also helping a couple other people because he has more

training and his English is really good so he can translate and a couple of the other guys have many hats the Malawians that we're working with and so you can only go as fast as you have leaders trained but like I said it's really easy

I can go to tons of villages where there's no church except for maybe a Seventh-day Adventist or a let's see Jehovah Witness is also very popular over there maybe a Jehovah Witness and a Catholic they're the only ones in this village so we can go show the Jesus film and people are like oh we need this come start a church well I don't have enough people to send there but the need is there we just don't have enough leaders yet to go so like I said we're kind of hitting the brakes but it's cool to see that need but if you send people and share the gospel and then you can only go once a month they become these sprouts without anything to support them and those churches you know come up and then they die and so we're kind of really focusing on leadership training right now to yeah I have a question yeah Caleb juice here so in the past

[41 : 43] I've seen a lot of like evangelistic kind of crusades you know big crowds in Africa is that still common yeah it definitely can be and what's your perspective on the fruitfulness and like you know it's got to have that church to back it up yeah it is fruitful sometimes it does help people it gives people a wake up call in Malawi it's probably not as fruitful as maybe in some of the other places that have higher education Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world we're in the bottom 10 GDP in the whole world wow so we're South Africa is quite educated people have a lot more education a lot more work so in places like that sometimes those crusades can give people a wake up call more so than maybe Malawi where they're quite still poor and a little bit backwards but the city life is way different than village life and I have a book about that on the table because in Tanzania I lived five hours from where I could buy cheese just as that's the best illustration we lived in the bush I was 40 minutes from a town but there wasn't even cheese in that town now I live in a million person capital city where I have three grocery stores within five minutes of me and so there's there's a whole book about how the cultural differences of city and and so there's a lot of things like that you can use WhatsApp is a great tool it's a messaging tool you can share videos with kids and reach people okay because so many people get these smartphones and they put a little bit of data on there and oh look there's a video that has its problems because pornography spreads but it also is a tool for evangelism and some ministries are you know we can share some of the videos that other ministries are using to get certain basics out there that are great even though it's a poor country there's quite it sounds like there's quite a broad tech technology yeah it depends on where you go like every every church has at least one or two young people that might have a smartphone now they're cheap cheap cheap smartphones you know like twenty thirty dollar smartphones and they don't have that all the time they have to earn the money and scratch off something and put like ten cents of data or twenty cents of data or talk time on it but it does help somewhere and that's where it's heading and so what's the stability of Malawi as far as like kind of governmental stability and peace and also economically government is it's okay it's democratic but there are also chiefs in every tribe and the chiefs like they're almost like kings over some of the larger tribes and they work together with the government so certain things you have to go to the chief for and and just like any king if you visit a king you bring a gift right I mean that's cultural it's not a bribe it's a gift but then there's government that's democratic two and a half years ago they had a presidential election and they proved that somebody hacked the system and so then they went a year and they did a they did a re-election the supreme court overturned the presidential results and re-elected which is quite rare especially in a place like

Africa that has a lot of dictators and the new guy he he had been a pastor of assemblies of God church so there's certain things he's been attacking certain corruption but he's still not the best leader either but I don't think anybody going into a system like that can do it right you know you just can't do it but economically they're really struggling there is not enough foreign currency in country to buy the needed supply so they import more than they export they export a little bit of tobacco some tea a little bit of cotton couple mining things but they don't export very much but they import a lot they're landlocked and so what happened a month ago my co-workers are like hey there's fuel over here I waited three hours in line to get fuel well why the fuel is in the neighboring countries but nobody had dollars or euros or yen to buy the fuel they only had local currency and they couldn't use it and so until the government figured out a way to get 4x maybe from a donation from outside and they couldn't buy the fuel and we also had some cyclones hit a year this year early in

January February knocked out one of the hydroelectric dams and so there definitely is not electricity enough for the country so in certain areas there's 9 to 10 hours rolling blackout every day which is kind of annoying yeah when you know that you're gonna have 9 or 10 hours without electricity each day it's hard to plan certain things so that's not unique to me of Malawi and that's I think huge chunk of the world yeah it used to be 4 and 5 hours but 9 to 10 hours you got to have a generator to charge the to do work you got to have a backup source of power 4 or 5 hours you can have a big battery on your computer and work but 9 to 10 hours you got to have a second battery or start a generator not use your fridge for 9 or 10 hours you can't bake things like that so yeah yes I imagine here I'll come up with you yeah generator takes gasoline so that's part of the problem when they were having the shortage they were limiting how many jerry cans somebody could have but all these places needed you know big certain apartment complexes have big generators malls and banks have big generators that use fuel yeah it's it's a catch-22 so I heard recently it's better they've found another way to do it but I think it's one of the things the government controls the price of fuel which is nice no matter where you go it's one price the whole country whether you're in the bush or the city but the government if the government doesn't have for exchange they should let the private investors who can find ways to get foreign exchange money to buy supplies outside so I'm not sure I'm not an economic major but it is it is a struggle so but it could be a lot worse so it's not a war or anything it's quite a peaceful country it's time

I'll say one more thing I you know I really appreciate the illustration of the papaya versus the mango and the it's really long-term thinking and you know thinking into the future and I remember as a younger Christian you know looking at the early church and the early church didn't have long-term thinking there was kind of a short-term Jesus is coming soon and we see people just selling all their stuff and I think you know one of the unique things kind of in grace churches as we see the difference there you know and a lot of people run their ministries with this just a short-term thinking and really you can build so much if you just have a long-term plan five ten fifty years into the future and Jesus is coming cyclical plan where you're always going to have people at different stages at all time yeah yeah so well thanks for sharing this morning yeah and we're looking forward to the next service all right