



Janelle didn't have a degree in theology.  
Steve Vinton, June 4, 2007

I was walking back in the dark with Godfrey from David & Rachel's house -- so happy to have seen David & Rachel sitting around the fire with Matthew, Shabani and Wilfred, the five of them enjoying good coffee and good conversation. The sun was just setting and the dusk getting a little dark and down the hill came bounding Janerose and Pauline so very happy because Emmanueli had taken the two of them out on their first driving lesson! With us having so many schools already, and with more on the way, it will make things so much easier when the two of them can drive! And all I could think of is that it was probably five years ago back when Emmanueli was still a student that I taught him how to drive, practicing with him night after night on the road from our house to his house. I guess it might not seem like a big deal anymore to most people that a couple of women are learning to drive cars because I guess quite frankly we've already forgotten that there was a time not all that long ago when women couldn't vote. But I'm still living in a world where unless we do something and intervene, girls still don't get to go to school! And yet here Pauline and Janerose are learning to drive cars! It's a small victory I guess, but maybe it's just not really all that small after all.

And as we sat around the fire in the kitchen this evening eating positively the best spaghetti in the world -- Susan's fantastic sauce made with fresh tomatoes topped with the most delicious mushrooms made all the better tasting because they were a gift from her friend Mama Shadrack who had come with her little baby to show Susan how much better she was doing -- I was thinking about how much I missed Janelle. She would have been in the kitchen with us probably this evening, and we

would have been talking about this person or that person in the village, or this student, or someone else Janelle loved. Janelle was the one who found Joyce there in the market in Maguu and through her tears last January begged me to find a way for Joyce to get to go to school. Janelle was the one who after schooling Josh and Jonathan all day took the kids at school who were behind and did extra English with them. Janelle was the one who always rooted for the underdog. She was out there with Susan visiting the sick, the widows, the orphans. How many times did I see her getting the milk for the babies! Janelle was there all the time working with Sarah until late in the night because she was always ready to do all of the hard jobs, she was the tireless worker, the one who could love people all day long and then work and organize and produce all evening. I should be really sad because Janelle's on an airplane today flying to London and then on to America because she's got to head back there probably to have some kind of surgery. I should be really sad because it happened so suddenly. One day we were in the car to the hospital in Dar, the next day I was hearing that she had to go to America, the day after I was there getting from Janerose the box of Janelle's things that had hastily been put together in the village and the bag that was supposed to have her passport. It was so big and bulky I had to open it up to check to be sure her passport was in it and there was not just her passport but all of those letters, written hastily as word spread that Janelle wouldn't be coming back from the hospital in Dar, and in the expression of all of those little notes I could see the work that Janelle had done in touching the hearts of so many people. I could choose to be sad but right now sitting there in the kitchen missing her not being there around the fire

with us. But instead all I could do was to smile and think of what a wonderful missionary Janelle was here.

Janelle didn't have a degree in theology. But she told her students and her friends about Jesus. She never went to medical school. But she helped more sick people and she loved them as she did it. She didn't have her masters in education. But she took the kids who were slow and behind and taught them after school and she did it in a way that made them feel special and they loved her for it. She had no MBA. But she used the business sense she learned from her father and her grandfather and she applied it to helping how many kids make a little bit of money. Janelle didn't always conjugate her verbs right in Swahili and she made a lot of mistakes in Kihehe. But Janelle loved people. She spent her time in the village and somehow communicated to people that she liked being with them. She was always ready to share. And if there ever was a job to be done Janelle was always ready to pitch in and always ready to work hard. She was rich, but she made herself to be poor so that as she lived among the poor she could be one with them.

I taught Emmanuelli to drive. I'll always smile thinking of that. I taught Wilfred Math and Susan taught him English and now he's our star math teacher here at Madisi and that just makes me smile deep down inside of me. I like to think that somehow Susan and Sarah and I taught Janelle how to be a missionary. I'll always smile even more thinking of that. You know this morning my computer died. For me, that's the same as telling a farmer here that his only cow died. Or that the well has dried up. I can't think of anything that it's equivalent for folks back in America. A computer dying with all of my data on it makes a grown man cry real tears. David did a six-hour surgery on my computer and the "dead cow" has come back to life. That's certainly enough to make any man rejoice. And to quickly make a backup! And to have a real bounce in your

step. I could find enough in our planning meetings to rejoice about -- the dreams of beginning to build our college, our plans to open our first medical clinics soon, the news that we will move forward on building new schools in Mikalanga and Mtambula and in Mbozi. I could certainly rejoice over the report that so many people have responded so generously and we've got more than \$19,000 to buy textbooks with. I can rejoice that Joshua came to bring me his own prized possession -- his computer with its brand new 4 hour battery -- to give me to use when my computer died. I can rejoice knowing what a great son I have! I can rejoice that Rachel spent the night Saturday in Igoda with one of her students and is finding increasingly that the people in this village love her. I can rejoice that last Sunday when I was sharing with the students at Tumaini University and said that as Christian people we finally have to stand up and say that enough is enough, that it is a moral tragedy of momentous proportions that kids in villages still don't get to go to school, well those students did more than just respond in thunderous applause, they came up afterwards to sign up to volunteer, they brought their cash, they asked for our bank account number so they could send their money, they cried real tears over the reality of the pain that it is for kids all across this country in village after village who don't even get a chance to go to school. And I can rejoice that the number of students in our schools has now reached 1651 and that come September we are expecting literally hundreds perhaps even thousands more.

But mostly tonight I can rejoice that in the few minutes that those kids had after they learned that that Janelle was too sick to come back from the hospital that they hastily had to write their letters to the teacher they loved -- Janelle. If we were a company we'd find the Janelles of this world and pay them top dollar salaries and offer them great perks to come here and serve in these villages. But we're not a company. We're a mission. So we wait for God to call the

Janelles and the Matthews, the Rachels and the Davids, the Fadhilis and the Eliezers, the Janeroses and the Paulines of this world and to send them to serve with us. Jesus told his disciples to pray unto the Lord of the Harvest to send workers because the harvest was plentiful but the workers were few.

I look all across this land and I see village after village where there are kids who don't get to go to school, where there is no clinic and no safe place for a woman to give birth to her child, where there is no clean drinking water ...

Do something of great significance today. In

the hustle and bustle of your day, take out just a few moments and pray unto the Lord of the Harvest to send workers. Part of me remains perplexed at why it really matters if people pray like that. Surely God who is all knowing knows that workers are needed! But part of me reads the words of Jesus and has to believe that if He said that it's important that God's people pray for workers, then somehow in the way that God works He uses those prayers and somehow it does matter. Somehow it matters.

The harvest is indeed plentiful. But the workers are indeed few.