



Letting go of John  
Steve Vinton, December 22, 2006

I got the news that John had dropped out of school at the worst of times.

Sarah told me. But I had to force my brain to just blot it out. I was being pulled in so many directions - government inspectors who were here to accredit our schools which needed my "undivided attention", our planning meetings which even if that was all that was going on would have been enough to run my brain in overdrive, a school year about to end - part of our missionary team leaving to head back to America - a whole new group of people arriving in January -- and logistics that I had to think about and meddle in and attend to, a problem that tore me up inside for all the dilemmas and the hurt that it created and which had no seemingly easy solution, pressures it seemed on all sides.

And in the midst of all of that, the news that John had dropped out of school.

I wanted to get right up and get in my car and race to his village but I couldn't. I knew I just couldn't do that. I knew I had to stay focused on the big picture of things. Godfrey and Emmanueli and I had to stay focused for the good of all of the schools, of all of the students, for the whole program in these villages. I had to do the right thing and stay glued in my seat, I had to make sure all of those reports got written and finished if we were to have any hope of getting those inspectors to agree to accredit our schools, I had to get all of those important things done, I had to make sure the next morning I was ready to start our long trip across country at 6 am. I had to let go of John. Knowing that's what I had to do didn't make it any easier to do it though. But when the car broke down in the middle of no where and we

ended spending a whopping 11 hours with nothing to do (and a computer with no battery left) I found myself with the time to let my mind relax and finally wander, and think, and plot. I got back here to our little village of Igoda six days later armed with the firmly resolved plan that we'd get the tree up, trimmed, we'd take the kids into town to let them go Christmas shopping, we'd celebrate Christmas, and then the day after Christmas I'd go to Ikaning'ombe and Godfrey and Emmanueli and I would find John and we'd work it out with that uncle of his. John would go to school!

Got back here to Madisi late last night, got up this morning, saw Huston and couldn't resist asking him how I could find John in Ikaning'ombe. Puzzled look. "John's up in class." Shabani and Kulwa are having special classes for students who are behind during vacation and John's up in class! What a great way to start the day! Turns out Pastor Chengula (one of our students) went to see the uncle, told him that it was not only sickeningly offensive to God that he was keeping John out of school, but that it was actually a criminal offense once a student was in school to force him out, and that it was best to just let him come back to school before Mr Vinton came back from the trip in order to simply avoid a lot of unnecessary hassles.

I called for John to come see me during recess. He came down the hill. And he smiled at me. And I smiled back. I had had to let go of John. But God never let go of John. He was at work, hard at work, using Chengula, accomplishing His purposes. The miracle of Christmas! God never letting go of humanity. Coming to live amongst us, first as that baby we celebrate at

Christmas, then as a man who stunned us with his miracles, his teachings, his love, his sacrifice.

All because He would never let go of us.

Christmas came early this year - not on the calendar - but in my heart and in my mind. To all of you our friends and family, may Christmas also come for you this year, may you be blessed, may you bless others.