



What in the world Jonathan was up to!
Steve Vinton, September 13, 2007

As Godfrey and I drove up in the car there was Jonathan with a sickle in his hand slashing away at the tall grass with his friend Yusto. Jonathan dropped the sickle and came running up to the car. "I cut grass all day today Dad!" The kid was so unbelievably happy he couldn't stop smiling, and I gave him a big but quick hug, and rushed off down the hill because Emmanuelli was driving Chapakazi full of luggage and mattresses and food -- and our 13 teachers who have just arrived from the United States, Canada and Europe -- and I wanted to be there to see it all begin -- seven women and six men -- joining us, full of excitement, a tinge of wonder, maybe a little fear of the unknown, but in any case, ready and willing to make a village in this country their home, to teach their students, to get involved in their lives, to hopefully love them, share the gospel with them, be there for them when they're sick, counsel them, impact their lives. But first they have an awful lot to learn!

Sarah and Rachel had paired each of them with one of our students -- Andrew with Musa, Jeff with James, Amie with Agness, Magan with Sturida, Lauren with Veronica, Anne with Pelida, Sarah with Hawa, Steve with Dismas, Jessica with Rose, Adon with Pascal, Jeff with Walter, Andrew with Imani and Amy with Shukrani -- and after they got things unloaded I got to watch the wonderful scene of each one of those students taking their teacher off to their home in their village! Certainly those new missionaries are going to learn an awful lot from Sarah and all of her sessions of training with them during the next two weeks, but they're going to learn infinitely more from those students, and their families and their neighbors and the people in the village.

And so as we saw them all off, Susan and I walked back to the house together joking that this is how parents must feel when they send their kids off to college, watching the sun set slowly, feeling really good having the anticipation that wonderful things were happening already in the lives of those teachers and in the lives of their students -- and then suddenly I had to find out from Susan what in the world Jonathan was up to spending the whole day slashing away at the tall grass. "He's cutting grass to make money to help his friend Yusto go to school Steve."

My throat kind of choked up.

"Yusto's a nice boy and I'm very glad that he and Jonathan are good friends. He'll finish primary school this coming week and all the boy talks about is wanting to come here to Madisi to start secondary school and learn English. I've been to his house. The kid really has nothing, dear."

Yup Yusto has nothing.

And so he and Jonathan slash grass together. So Yusto gets to go to school.

The wonder of it all is that as Jonathan's father I could have made choices that would have made what has happened in Jonathan's life a total impossibility. I could have prevented this from ever happening. I could have wrecked it all for him. All I would have had to do is create a little America for him here in Tanzania and keep him out of the village. And Jonathan would have never even had a clue of what he was missing out on and what I was depriving him of.

And suddenly everything was coming into focus as I thought of Jonathan out there slashing that grass with Yusto so he could help him go to school. I realized that the choices Susan and I and Godfrey & Emmanuelli and Sarah and Janerose and Pauline are making as leaders of Village Schools Tanzania could also wreck everything for these new missionary teachers -- and it could wreck it for them without them ever even knowing it! All we would have had to do was to try to create a little America here for them, build nice special houses for them, keep them right here to live with us, take care of them, be there for them when they're homesick, do everything to try to make the adjustment to living in Africa as easy as possible by making sure that they have at the very least running water and electricity and

food from America and everything else to make it comfortable for them. And then we'd send them out to teach in their classrooms all right but we'd make sure that their priority was to get to know their fellow missionary teachers really well just as if they were in summer camp together so they could build with them friendships that would last a lifetime! It would sound so good! And every now and then we'd send them out into the village to maybe meet some people. And they too would have never had a clue of what they were missing out on and what we had deprived them of.

I love seeing the person Jonathan is becoming.

I love thinking of the people these new teachers are becoming too.