

When we came back to the town of Eshowe, Pastor Julius got a call from a parishioner that his daughter was sick and wanted a visit. Mr. Ntuli was a Math and Physical Science teacher. He informed us that his daughter had been ill and lately she had fainted, had trouble breathing, and has an injured leg that was intentionally hurt by someone. Mr. Ntuli felt that his daughter, Mandi who is 14, had a demon as she would just have sudden fits with breathing attacks and couldn't sleep at night.

I went with Julius to their house. Mr. Ntuli greeted us. His mother-in-law was there. We visited and he shared the situation. We listened. I was very aware that this was a sacred moment. And, I was a bit overwhelmed that these people invited me, a stranger, into their home to share. They invited Mandi to come in. She had a sweet round face, very short hair, and big brown eyes. She came very willingly but she was a bit timid. Having 2 pastors visit especially a strange white one must have been intimidating for a 14 year old. Pastor Julius introduced me. She gave a little wave and a smile. She had a bandage on her knee and she limped into the room. Her father and mother-in-law explained that after the person hurt her (she had been a friend) the offender went around celebrating. They wondered if she was demon possessed as well.

Pastor Julius informed me that we would lay hands on her. He would pray in Zulu, me in English. We stood by her. I laid one hand on her shoulder and the other on her short kinky hair. She was a very tender person. Pastor Julius prayed and all the others started chanting as he prayed. I don't know Zulu so I'm not sure if they were praying in Zulu or tongues. It was intoxicating. The rhythm of this non intelligible prayer was a balm. I felt as though the prayers were lifted as one body. When Julius finished I began to pray for Mandi. I don't remember what I said but the words came easy. They didn't say anything as I prayed. When I finished we all said the Lord's Prayer together in English, even the mother-in-law who didn't know English. It's amazing to pray a common prayer together with people from the other side of the globe. When we finished we all sang a chorus of "Thank You Jesus" or "Seyabonga". Mandi seemed calm but shortly after we finished she had one of those fits - interpret it as you may - a breathing problem or the devil fighting back but there was a struggle. Pastor Julius laid his hands on her. I gave her a prayer cross that I had brought from Minnesota. It is about a 5 inch cross that is curved to fit between your fingers and in the palm of your hand. Mandi gripped it with both hands. It reminded me of someone grasping a life preserver when drowning in the sea. Mandi had the incarnate presence of God to fight her battle - the hand of Julius on her shoulder and the cross enveloped in her hands.

We visited for awhile and then Mr. Ntuli asked me a question. "Have you ever killed a chicken?" It seemed like an odd question in the circumstance. I told him I had butchered chickens when I was a boy on the farm but not since. He informed me that they wanted to give us a chicken for our help. His mother-in-law came out from the kitchen with a chicken in her arms. She had put a plastic grocery bag around its feet so it wouldn't claw me. Its head was sticking out of the bag. She handed me the chicken. I was surprised how calm the chicken was. I knew enough to hold it tight. A swaddled chicken is a secure chicken. We thanked them for the gift. Pastor Julius and I went back to the car. When we came to the Ntuli's it was light but now it was dark. We journeyed down the potholed, winding mountain about 10 mph. I was bouncing around with a chicken in my arms. Every once in a while the chicken would "baak." It was more of a conversational tone than concern. The chicken was warm against my arms and chest. I began to stroke the back of its neck. Because it was so calm I wondered if it was a chicken that had had a

lot of human contact so that it was not afraid. It made me wonder if this chicken was not the runt of the flock but perhaps the prize chicken – the fatted calf so to speak.

Pastor Julius and I didn't speak. In fact, Julius was quite matter of fact – not that this wasn't a powerful moment mind you, but that this was a daily journey of a pastor in South Africa. He was humbly silent as we bounced down the mountain in the moonlight – a peaceful chicken in my arms, the beautiful mystery of the gospel in my head, and the power of God's love in my heart.

Mr. Ntuli called us this morning. Mandi slept all night. God is good.

