

Hope Encounters

The Newsletter of Autumn Hope Ministries

August 2011

Summer Edition



Pastor Steve Jones preaching the Gospel in Pakistan

New Web Site

If you have not yet checked out our new web site, take a moment to do so today! It is filled with all types of useful information and updates on the ministry!

www.autumnhopeministries.com

Email Newsletter

Sign-up for our email updates on the web site. Go to:

www.autumnhopeministries.com

And sign up on the bottom left of the home page.

Thousands Without Food in the Horn of Africa

The drought conditions continue to worsen in the Horn of Africa which includes the nation of Kenya. While Kenya has not yet seen the drastic famine conditions already experienced in Ethiopia and Somalia, experts say it is only a matter of time. There simply is not enough food to feed the people. The food shortage has already led to sharply higher prices on corn and other staple items placing tremendous hardship on the people of the area. Some food prices have risen as much as 500% in the last year.

In the Western County of Kenya, (formerly the Western Province) some food is still available but the prices have made it impossible for most to purchase. Maize, or corn as we know it, is the staple item for all homes in the area. Although this area is normally fertile, it is also suffering from a lack of rain. Crops which are due to be harvested in late August or early September are estimated to only be about 40% of the normal harvest. The math is simple.

Over the last few months the situation has greatly affected our friends and churches in the area. We have lost four pastors to malnutrition related issues and an unknown number of church members. As you can imagine the elderly and the children are the most vulnerable. Government estimates are placing the number dead in Kenya alone in the tens of thousands. Unfortunately as is typically true with African numbers they are low. Typically only those who are reported are counted. The majority of families in the Western County are so remote they are never heard from and therefore are not counted.

All of this is taking place while many in America are worrying about our their futures. For the entire month of July many were glued to television sets awaiting a solution to the debt crisis only to see the stock market take a dip with its resolution. Uncertainty seems to be the common mood in America today. Because of this uncertainty we tend not to look at other situations in the world fearing that we might feel obligated to do something. Whether we look or not we are obligated. When the Rich Young Ruler questioned Jesus on eternal life, Jesus quickly instructed him to sell all and give it to the poor. He could not, and Jesus' heart broke for him. How many of us are breaking His heart today? We focus on our own concerns and wants while others do without.

I will be traveling to Kenya in September as well as November of this year. It is imperative that we help our brothers and sisters in this difficult time. It is only possible for us to help if we all work together. If everyone reading this newsletter would sacrifice and give \$100.00, we could feed 1000 people for a month. I realize that is a lot of money for some of you but think of the difference it would make. Some of you can do more. Over the last six and one half years we have accomplished much together. Let us not stop now. Please help us make a difference.

**More than 350
people stood,
risking everything
to accept Christ
during the crusade
meetings in
Pakistan**

The Hidden Church—Pakistan

Honestly, I did not know what to expect. I had done my homework but nothing could have prepared me for what I would see and experience during my seven days in the Punjab region of Pakistan.

Knowing that Pakistan is more than 98% Muslim, I expected something far different than what I found. What I found was a hidden, often persecuted church that loves Jesus. Their desire to know and understand the Word of God drives them to take chances that you and I will most likely never know.

Check out the second page of this newsletter for photos and stories on this amazing door that has opened to us.



P O Box 4044
Cookeville, TN 38502
931-246-4699
info@autumnhopeministries.com
www.autumnhopeministries.com

On arriving in Lahore, I quickly realized the plight of the church in Pakistan. Although Pakistan is an Islamic Republic, the constitution does allow for freedom of religion. In some areas of the country this is totally ignored and Christianity is not allowed. In Punjab, however, it is tolerated, but the fact that it is tolerated does not protect it from persecution. Christians in this area tend to live in groups together in very poverty stricken areas. Since most all of the jobs are controlled by Muslims, the Christians have a hard if not impossible time finding work. They are forced to do the jobs that few others would want to do and often for very little pay. If a Muslim becomes a Christian in this area, he or she can expect to lose their livelihood. Therefore, when a person stands to accept Christ in Pakistan, they are also standing to accept a life of persecution and hardship. That is quite different from our American version of Christianity which we so closely tie to the American Dream. We expect to be blessed and prosper, they expect to be persecuted and suffer. I wonder which takes the most faith?



The pastors and leaders of the area were eager to hear the word of God. Few of them have had any formal training in the Word.



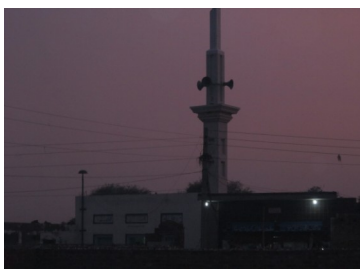
I must admit, it was comforting knowing that Samson was always watching

Saturday nights crusade was held in a city alley. Approximately 400 people attended. I was always welcomed with a lei.

The Flag lowering ceremony at the Pakistan-Indian border on Sunday was a special treat. Never seen anything like this before! About 25,000 people show up each week to watch and cheer for their country!



Standing to accept Christ on Monday



The minaret of the mosque in Rao Khan Wala as viewed from the platform of our meeting.



Preaching the love of Jesus to the people.

In the Shadow of the Enemy

It was one of the most amazing moments of my life. As I sat in the small, incredibly impoverished home just a couple of hundred feet from the vacant lot on which our meeting was to be held, I suddenly heard something familiar. Someone was singing, *How Great Thou Art* and it was not in Urdu, the language of Pakistan. In fact it sounded strangely familiar. As I looked around, I saw one of the Pakistani Pastors holding his cell phone and smiling. I was sitting in a remote village of Punjab Pakistan listening to Carrie Underwood sing *How Great Thou Art* at the *Grand Ole Opry*. The moment was overpowering to me as the Spirit of God fell on our small group and we all began worshipping Him together.

A few moments later another sound overpowered our little cell phone. It was the Muslim call to prayer coming from the minaret of the mosque at the end of our vacant lot. Those who were already gathered at the lot were forced by law to turn the sound system off, and wait for twenty minutes after the prayer call before turning it back on. I thought to myself, the enemy is

trying to interrupt, but he will not be successful.

When the twenty minutes was up I was escorted into the venue and moments later took the platform to share the word of God. I did so with a boldness and anointing I have rarely felt. As I spoke the minaret rose right in front of me, barely 200 feet away. I knew however that the Spirit in me was greater than the spirit of that minaret. When the time came I gave a simple invitation for those present to accept Christ as their savior. Out of the nearly 1000 present, about 250 stood making their decision public.

It is amazing what God will do with us and through us if we allow Him to. This country boy from Tennessee, ended up in a remote village listening to Carrie Underwood sing *How Great Thou Art* on a Pakistani cell phone. God used it to encourage me, and 250 people will be in heaven because He brought it all together. Thank You Father.

The “Forgotten Families” of Western

The Famine in the Horn of Africa is beginning to draw much needed attention. Since the CBS Evening News made it their anchor point this week the attention of many in the world have turned to what is being called “The Greatest Humanitarian Catastrophe in the world today”. As I watched CBS’ coverage of this situation I was amazed at how suddenly certain faces began to appear. Politicians, Rock Stars, and entertainers seemed to line up to say, “Hey! Look at me I am here”! Exactly where was Here? A UN refugee camp just inside the border of Kenya. There is no doubt that the Refugee camp is much needed and is bringing to light stories of unimaginable suffering. This camp is ground zero for the United Nations and the world as they attempt to pour food into the area.



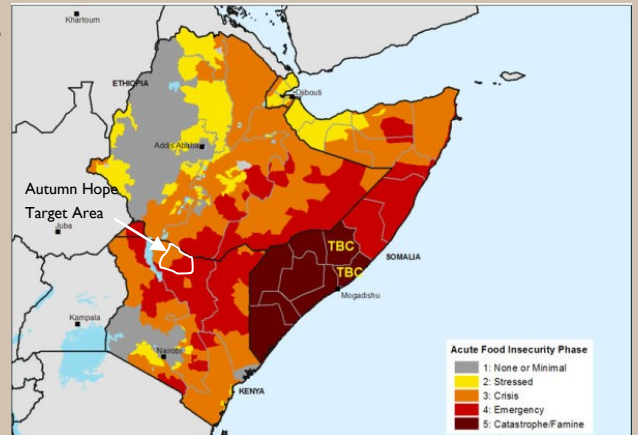
But what about the rest of the nation of Kenya? While the news media focuses on the plight of Somalis, which are obviously in a severe crisis, what is happening to those in Kenya facing the same crisis? Based on the Famine prediction map, published in July and predicting conditions for July thru September, much of Kenya is already in an emergency state. This includes most of the Western County where Autumn Hope has been working for nearly seven years.



I have always referred to the Western County as the “Forgotten Ones” because while churches

all across the US love to go on African Mission trips, none other than Autumn Hope end up in the Western County. Why? It is a remote and difficult area to reach. And now, they are being forgotten once again.

The people of the Western district are more than just Kenyans in trouble. They are my friends and family. I have eaten in their homes, preached in their churches, blessed their children, and baptized many of them. And now they need our help. The tendency of Americans is to see a need such as this and feel the tug on heart. We see the suffering, especially the children, and we hurt for the. Then, we go about our business and forget. They truly are the “Forgotten Ones”.



Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS) projection of the 2011 Horn of Africa famine for July-September, using the IPC scale, July 21, 2011. Image- Famine Early Warning Systems Network - USAID.



Beginning immediately, we are taking donations toward our “**Forgotten Ones**” fund. For a donation of \$40.00 you can provide food for a family of four for one month. They will receive rice, and maize (corn) to provide minimal nutrition. The goal is to provide for 250 families immediately. That means 250 people giving \$40.00. Some of you can give much more. Phase two is to provide for a second 250 in the next 60 days. If we all work together this is a small commitment. I am asking for your help like never before. Lives literally depend on what we do. Thank you for helping.

Mat 10:42

And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward.”

The Brickyard Children of Pakistan

Over the years I have been in some sad, hopeless places but I do not believe any of them compares to the situation in the brickyards of Pakistan. The Punjab province is known for its brick making. The area provides brick for much of the country as the soil has just the right amount of clay to make the bricks strong. It is not difficult to stand in many areas and count as many as 15 or 20 chimneys reaching into the sky in the surrounding countryside. These chimneys represent the ovens that bake the bricks.

These chimneys also represent something else. They represent a way of life that is difficult and hopeless. Around each brickyard there is a community. The number of people in the community is determined by the size of the brickyard but I was told that most have around two hundred inhabitants. This community is solely dependent on the brickyard for survival. The brickyard provides a place to live although usually the conditions are deplorable, and it provides a very meager income. I also found that in many cases the inhabitants of these brickyard communities are mostly Christians. Because they are Christians they cannot find work anywhere else and they are forced into this lifestyle. The work is hard, making bricks by hand from 6:00 AM until 6:00 PM. You are paid by the number of bricks you make. If it rains, one or more days worth of bricks may be ruined and you get nothing.



Life is short under these kinds of conditions. During the hot months of summer temperatures reach 105 to 110 degrees with 95% humidity. There is no shade or covered area to work. It all takes place in the open sun. I was told that life expectancy of a brick worker is only about 40 years. When parents die young, the obvious product is orphans. The brickyards are filled with them. No one knows how many. Each brickyard has its own group and community of orphans surviving any way they can. They sleep under wheel barrows or old boxes. They eat what ever they can and they work. That's right, they work. From 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM they work making bricks. When the day is done they get a small bowl of rice for their labor. While nothing binds them to the brickyards, they have no opportunity to leave or improve themselves. Uneducated, hopeless, starving, they are slaves.



I believe God allowed me to see this for a reason. I believe He wants us to help. While there we fed the children at one sight and to see them devour the food was heartbreaking. When I tried to give one little boy the left-overs from my plate he said he could not take it. I asked why. "If I take extra, someone will beat me", he said. I assured him they would not and watched him eat a second plate full. We gave them a treat; a simple bag of Lay's Potato chips. It was treated as gold. But today, they are hungry again.

I do not yet know what we can do to help. I will be traveling back in March of 2012 and intend on researching the situation to see what might be done. In the mean time, we have an avenue in which we could get food to some of these children on a periodic basis. It is not a solution, but it is a start. My question to you is simple, will you help?

If you would like to know more feel free to contact me. I will be glad to share with you concerning the needs of these children.

Pastor Steve

