



Next to my tree *

An update from the Thomas family's perspective
in Rwanda, Africa, Summer 2009

* In Kinyarwanda, "ku giti cyange," literally, "next to my tree," means in my opinion, or from where I stand.

Discipling for Development

(<http://www.navigators.org/us/ministries/movingmountains>)

We are pleased that Discipling for Development (holistic, Christ centered, communitywide, transformational development) is going ahead well in our four pilot communities. Just yesterday I was in one of the communities that I work with. They were eager to learn the lesson that I was teaching them and were all actively involved in teaching the lessons in their community. We teach lessons that help transform worldview before we attempt to help them solve any of their existing problems. We realize that worldview transformation is essential to holistic, whole-community transformation. In one of the communities I asked the participants if the lessons that we've been teaching have been of some help to them. I had lots of good responses from community members, but the response of an older lady really impressed me. She told me that the lessons have been changing the way she thinks. Since she has started the lessons, she has made some changes in the way she does things. She lives in a very remote area, far from the road, other people, and the church. After the first couple of lessons, she joined a savings group and saved up enough money to purchase a piece of property by the road, in a more central location. Then she and sixteen others got together and started a house building co-op. They used all their strength and resources to build one house for one member, then moved on to the next member. She said they had built seven houses so far, and she was one of the house owners! She was so proud! And that committee hasn't even finished the mobilization phase yet! I trust that there are many beautiful transformations coming in this little rural community.

We can see that even though we are still in the early stages of D for D in communities, God is at work transforming thoughts, and beginning the transforming work in the lives of individuals. We will keep working, praying, and building relationships knowing that God will continue to help us work well in these communities, releasing His transforming power.

Moringa Business

So much has happened with our Moringa Business in the last months! Since we received our investment capital at the beginning of the year, we have cleared the land, planted 1/3 of a hectare of Moringa, designed and installed an irrigation system, and purchased a donkey to help with farm work. Our packaging arrived from Kenya with a beautifully printed new logo. And the first harvests from the field are planned for this month. This is still the beginning phase of the business, but it feels good to be actually starting it up and not just dreaming and planning like I have for the last three years.



Kids and Family

Our kids are doing great! They love life, are full of energy and fun, and are doing well in school. Alandra is a blond little ball of energy and fun. She is so cute when she uses big words in perfect sentences out of her seven year-old little mouth. The fact is, she is growing up. Gwen has been working hard at her special reading program after being diagnosed with dyslexia nine months ago. Her reading hasn't reached fifth grade level yet, but she has been making good progress. She is a hard little worker and puts herself fully into her school work. Aren is also doing well. Since the diagnosis of ADHD last year, we are finding ways to work with him that fit his personality better. We are seeing quite a bit of progress, even though we still have our tough days. He loves bugs, snakes, skunks, lizards, and iguanas. He also loves drawing (he is an amazing artist) and making amazing lego contraptions (he is working on the Eiffel tower in his room these days). Bree has made a graceful transition to life at boarding school in Kenya (Rift Valley Academy). Its been a transition for all of us, and has been hard at times. But the truth of the matter is that she is thriving there, and God is answering our prayers to provide education, friendship, and spiritual growth for Breanna through this school. We cherish the six-week-long vacations we have with her between each trimester.



Prayer Requests

- * For the work in the four communities to continue to go well. We need to see full spiritual and physical transformation begin to happen so that we can expand to other areas of the country. Each community has its specific barriers to growth, and we need to see God's power breaking through those barriers.
- * For the six new English teachers who are coming to Rwanda for one to two years of teaching English in our high schools. Pray that the Lord's work would be done in their lives, and through their work here.
- * For the two new teachers for our kids and their new school year starting in September. We are blessed to have teachers who love the Lord and serve Him and us by teaching our children.



*In His hands,
David and Debby Thomas*