

December 1996

Dear Family and Friends,

Merry Christmas ! All that has happened in the last months has made us treasure memories with friends and family. I think the word that keeps describing things that affect us is " passages? ". We feel like maybe it is "our age" but we seem to have experienced numerous "passages" this year. While they are not all bad, they aren't always easy or painless to pass through.

Thank you for praying for us and Drew as he went through the " passage" of becoming a collegian. You can't imagine the tears and the pain we experienced as a family when the London cab taxi in Nairobi came and picked up only half the family to go to the airport. We were all fully aware that our "family" would never quite be the same again. In the midst of the tears we knew we wouldn't want the kids to quit going and growing. We are thankful for such family memories. How neat it has been to see Drew spread his wings and grow in faith as he watches God supplying his needs through gift and jobs the Lord has provided. He loves Wheaton College! We have only received one sad letter which he wrote recently saying "It is really hard to concentrate when everyone's talking about going home for the holidays and knowing I am not." So, we would appreciate you praying him through this season.

This past week has been very difficult as we went through the pain of losing a friend and colleague as he made the final "Passage" to be with Jesus. We don't grieve for him but for Ruth, his wife, and his three young children as they miss him at every turn. Andy Meakins was on the Ethiopian Airlines flight 961 that was hijacked and crashed near the Comoros Islands in the Indian Ocean. That is the same flight our children take to their school, Rift Valley Academy. So it really hit home!! How comforting to have heard from the survivors that Andy, in that last hour before the plane tragically crashed, was preaching and that many made decisions to choose Christ. Can you imagine entering Heaven's gates holding hands with some who had just met Jesus and having Him say, " Welcome! Well done thy good and faithful servant!! What a difference to have hope! Pray, as this has opened numerous opportunities for the mission family to share with others that hope

HOPE is what we have. as we see how God continues to work in the hearts of men and women in this land of Ethiopia. Let me tell you the story of a witchdoctor who recently made that "passage" from death to life here on earth. After Bill had taught principles of church planting at a recent three week seminar for Ethiopian cross culture missionaries, these men and women were sent to the field for three months of practical experience. Yasu went into a folk-Muslim area of southern Ethiopia 'a where there has historically been great resistance to the gospel. In fact, one of the first SIM martyrs was murdered by the Arsi people many years ago. Yasu began to stop by the witchdoctor's hut to speak to him about a greater power found in Jesus Christ. It wasn't long before the witchdoctor saw his need for a savior and recanted his relationship with Satan and folk-Islam and lifted his hands toward heaven to receive Jesus Christ. Since then, his hut

along with all of his religious artifacts were burned to the ground as a public statement of his commitment to Jesus Christ. Now on the same property where he offered sacrifices to Satan, a church building has been constructed made up of people who love and worship Jesus Christ. One of the members is this transformed witchdoctor. Wow, what a "passage".

As we celebrate this time of year when Jesus made that "passage" from heaven down to earth so we could all have this hope, we pray that each one of you would experience HIM to the fullest and that you too would be instrumental in leading others through this life's "passage".

Enjoying Him as we pass through life...

Bill & Grace