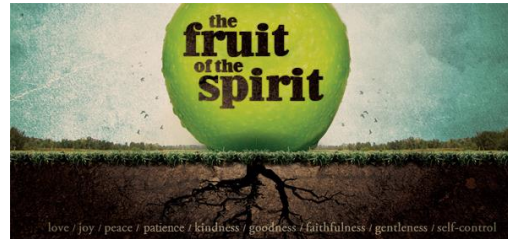


Empower International Ministries

Malawi Trip Report, July 2015, Sally Bryant

This sixth trip to Malawi gave me many opportunities to ponder Paul's words to the Galatians regarding the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control). Aimee McKone joined me for her fourth trip to Malawi, after a two-year absence.



Our trip began with a flight delay in San Francisco which caused us to miss our connecting flight to Africa. Our first flight to Houston was canceled; our second flight delayed. 24 hours after we had left home, we had traveled as far as Houston. This is daunting when there is an additional 30 hours of travel still to come – Houston to Lagos, Nigeria to Johannesburg, South Africa to Blantyre, Malawi. As we waited in Houston for our next flight to Lagos, several airline agents impressed upon us how dangerous the Lagos airport was. We were told that armed guards accompanied their flight crews everywhere they went. My patience was already being tested – now my peace was gone. I began to wonder if we should cancel our trip; perhaps the flight delays were God's way of telling us we should not travel. However, we persevered and were protected by your many prayers – thank you!



#### **Funerals and Ebola**

Prior to landing in Lagos, we were given a health evaluation form to complete. It asked, "Have you been associated with a funeral in the past three weeks?" This, along with repeated quick checks for fever, is their attempt to prevent Ebola from entering their country. We had been told to expect many requests for bribes, and the first demand came almost immediately. Two of our group did not have their yellow fever certificate with them (it's not required for transit when traveling from the US to South Africa). The official told them, "I won't drag you off to the hospital for testing. And since I'm doing something nice for you, you do something nice for me. And put it right here." They gave her a box of chocolates and walked on. When we landed in Lagos, five white Americans (Aimee, two Hassidic rabbis, a woman also doing volunteer work, and myself) were herded together and our passports taken from us. We were assigned a young, armed officer, who held our passports and began walking us from arrivals to the transfer area. We had to pass through five different stations and at each station, there was an argument about our passing through. Each time, our guard prevailed and we passed through. We believe each station was a request for a bribe and God held us in his hands so that we passed through without any issue. Our five-hour layover passed quickly as we talked with the rabbis about their upbringing in Houston, their work, and Israel.

When we landed in Johannesburg, we wondered if our luggage had also arrived. We had not seen it since we entrusted it to the airlines, many long hours ago. We were very happy to be reunited with it, and also very happy to recheck it to our final destination in Malawi.

## Maize Muslims

Aimee and I arrived in Blantyre as Eid al-Fitr, the feast to celebrate the end Ramadan, was underway. All around us, we saw Malawians heading to the nearby mosque. The mosque, very close by to our hotel, dominated our visit with its frequent calls to prayer and large influx of attendees. When we asked about the popularity of Islam, we were told that while many in Malawi are converting to Islam, many more are in truth “Maize Muslims,” knowing they can attend a service at the mosque and receive a meal.



## Master’s Class

What a joy to see our partners in Malawi and to see their ownership of the Empower materials! We held a Master Class in Blantyre at Pastor Bright Bottoman’s church. Pastor Bright is the head of a consortium of several churches in the area, and has been teaching the New Man, New Woman, New Life materials to the other pastors.



We were so blessed hear how Pastor Bright is using the Empower materials! He offered a unique story to emphasize the fact that Adam had been with Eve during the temptation in the garden. In his story, a pastor overheard a couple his flock arguing whether Adam or Eve was responsible for the sin of eating the apple. (This is a big deal in Malawi, where often a misunderstanding of scripture leads them to blame the woman for all the sin in the world, thus justifying their mistreatment of women).

In this story, the man and the woman argued and argued among themselves. The pastor interrupted them to invite them to dinner. When they arrived for dinner, they saw the pastor had prepared a beautiful feast for them – all the sumptuous food they could eat set out upon a snowy white tablecloth. The pastor welcomed them to the feast and told them they could eat from every dish on the table except for one covered dish, and then excused himself, inviting them to begin eating. As the couple ate, they kept looking at the one covered dish forbidden to them. Pretty soon, one asked the other, “What do you think is in there?” “I don’t know. What do you think?” Well, it wasn’t long before they decided it wouldn’t hurt to take just a quick peek inside the dish. As soon as they took the cover off the dish, a big rat, sitting on a bed of dirt, ran out, staining the snowy white tablecloth. The couple was horrified and tried to clean up the cloth but the stain could not be removed. At that moment, the pastor re-entered

the room. The man said, “Oh, look at what this woman has done.” The woman said, “Oh, look at what this man has done.” The pastor told them, “I heard you arguing about whether Adam or Eve was responsible for sin entering the world. Now you know – each of us is guilty. We each bear the responsibility.” We saw how this story rang true for the men and women gathered together in Blantyre, and rejoiced in their realization that Jesus has set us free from the curse and restored us to right relationship with God and with one another.

### **Jesus Is Boss**

My translator for the past six years has been Pastor Arnold Mphulupulu Phiri. We asked him to share with the Master Class when the NMNWNL material had meant in his life. He told us:

*When I was born and raised, my dad was the boss of the house and my mother had to submit in everything. When I was growing up, I had that in my mind that the man should be the boss. When I got married, I treated my family like that. But after attending NMNWNL, I saw that it was wrong and I changed. I started helping my wife. When the church committee saw this, they said my wife was rude and had no manners. I showed them by doing “women’s work”; when they came to my house for meetings, I cooked for them. Now they are convinced that it is good and many have changed. Now I have freedom to help take care of my kids. If Jesus is Lord, then he is the boss of the house. We now have peace and partnership in the family. My wife is my partner, not my slave.*



Pastor Arnold is using the Empower material as premarital counseling material. We saw the fruit of this work as we noticed many more couples sitting together on this trip, and fathers holding their children.

### **Strong Marriage, Strong Family, Strong Church, Strong Community, Strong Country**

Because of the flight delays at the beginning of our trip, we had to condense the NMNWNL training in Lilongwe to 2 days. Fortunately, several in the group had attended the training last year – and fortunately, we were blessed with several men and women of deep conviction and strong leadership skills in the workshop! Our partners in this workshop were Pastor Harrison Kamanga and his wife Miriam, of Pentecost Revival Church, and Pastor Philip Mulinde and his wife Angela. Pastor Philip and Angela hosted us for the second year. Their teaching was very well received!

Our welcome page included our belief that strong marriages create strong families, which in turn create a strong church. A strong church develops a strong community, which helps create a strong country. This provided a prevailing theme for the workshop.





Pastor Gloria (on the right in this picture) is in her 30's with three children ages 13, 10 and 7. Her daytime job is at a butchery. She is clearly a gifted teacher and leader. When we asked about the customary burdens on a woman, Gloria noted that women are not invited or allowed to participate in any decisions to make the country better. She reminded us, "Educate a woman, educate the nation." Pastor Gloria is planning to teach this material through Bible Studies in her church.

### **Why We Keep Going Back**

This trip was very encouraging to us. We noticed more couples sitting together and more fathers holding their children. Our partners took ownership of the material and did an excellent job of running the workshops. However, there is still long way to go. We watched as several young girls took on the physical work of moving the chairs from the open church to a nearby house in the village. Too often, women are still seen as the "beasts of burden," a disposable commodity to be used by the "big men" in their world.

