

THE SCHLEHLEINS

Missionaries to the Tsongas of South Africa



RURAL MISSIONARY METHODS

A multi-step strategy for gathering sinners

Our teammates, the Meyers, are in the US presently. They are on furlough visiting churches and reporting about the work Jesus is doing among the Tsongas. The apostle Paul did this very thing (Ac. 14:27), so they are in good company.

I'm covering for some of his ministries, one of them being evangelism in a couple Tsonga villages. One idea Seth has hit upon recently has been using Bibles to attract the locals to the gospel message. Here's how it generally works:

Missionary Methods

1. Drive into a random Tsonga Village: There is a kind of excitement that accompanies this adventure. When I say "random", I don't mean there has been no research. We consider language groups, proximity to other works, fuel costs, population size, etc. But there really is a randomness to our exploration. "Hey, I wonder if there's a village back there." "Look, there's a river to cross; I bet there are some Tsongas tucked away to the east." Sometimes it's as simple as having one contact in a place.
2. Find a venue: Seth has found recently that choosing a local watering hole where people gather is the best method. Instead of people's homes, find a "spaza shop" where people go to buy smaller groceries. Ask the Ethiopian or Sudanese shop owner to preach near his door.

3. Bait the hook: Spurgeon said we ought to use all fair and right means to gather crowds. He said if a military uniform drew a crowd rather than a black coat, he'd wear it. "Better do strange things than have an empty chapel." For years, our white skin speaking Tsonga has drawn initial interest—and curious looks. Seth has found that offering a full Tsonga Bible for ten straight weeks of attendance has gathered many adults. It seems to be a valid use of \$8. We keep clear records. Anticipation grows for the tenth week.
4. Preach: We sing a few Tsonga hymns with the guitar to draw more curiosity. Then we teach the books of the New Testament, or memorize a brief gospel verse (we took three weeks to learn Romans 6:23). Sometimes we recite a catechism question or two. Then comes the preaching. We often choose parables. We write in the dirt. We use fruit from the mango trees as illustrations. We preach Christ, repentance, faith, Hell, Heaven, the cross. We often bring church members and our own children to participate.
5. Look for Fruit: After weeks and months of preaching, we look for fruit: a love for Scripture, a testimony of faith, a hatred of their sin, a desire to join a church that loves these things.

We've tried various versions of this method in many villages over the years. Sometimes the seed germinates quickly, sometimes not. Please pray.

For Jesus' sake,

Paul & Melinda,
Audrey, Nate, Law, Owen, Juju, Clara, Luke, Katie