

Dispatches: Visiting a Masaai village

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The
Buckner
Vision
group
visits
with
Masaai
villagers.
(Photos
by Ken
Camp)

Dispatches: Visiting a Masaai village

By Ken Camp

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Tuesday, Feb. 20, Masaai Mara wildlife preserve, Kenya

The past two days, our team members have grown to love the natural beauty of God's creation in Africa, and we have grown to love each other. Yesterday morning, we left Nairobi on a single-engine turboprop plane and flew west over the Rift Valley, landing on a dirt airstrip at the Masaai Mara

wildlife preserve.



Lioness with cub at the Masaai Mara wildlife preserve.

We spent most of the afternoon yesterday on a photo safari, then we rose before daybreak this morning for another early morning photo shoot in the wild. Our guides drove open-top 4X4 Land Cruisers down dirt roads through the preserve. We saw so many cape buffalo, impala and gazelle that we became almost blasé about them.

Since we were divided among two or three vehicles, different members of our team saw a variety of wildlife. I was amazed to see two different elephant families, a herd of about a dozen giraffe, a cheetah nuzzling its mate and-most impressive of all to me-a lioness making her way across the savannah, gently holding her tiny cub in her mouth, while another older cub ran along behind her trying to keep pace.



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Later, we visited a Masaai village. Our guide explained that everyone in each village was a blood relative, so they always married from outside their village. Members of the village hold all things in common-their cattle, sheep, goats and the money they collect from tourists who buy their handicrafts. The sight of families-both in the animal kingdom and in this different culture and people-group-caring for their young and sharing with

each other reminded me of the reason we are in Africa.

God has raised up some of his people here to provide love, nurture and a sense of belonging for orphans who might otherwise never know what it means to be part of a family. We can help be a part of that.



David Slover talks with a Masai.

Along the way, I felt like all the members of our team really began to bond with each other. Kyle Henderson led us in playing silly word games while we waited under a thatch-roofed shelter at the airstrip, waiting for a plane that was late. Some of the pastors told war stories about a few of the early churches they or friends of theirs had served. We compared the ages and interests of our children.

Team members brainstormed ideas about how their churches could plug into the kinds of ministries Buckner is doing in Kenya and wants to do in Ethiopia. And some opened up their hearts and lives in moments of transparency, sharing their deepest struggles and prayer concerns.

Ken Hall said the scheduling of the photo safari early in our trip was by design. In part, it allowed us a stress-free time to relax and let our body-clocks adjust to the change of time and season. It also gave us an

opportunity to enjoy recreation together and become comfortable with each other. He told me much of what we will see and experience the rest of the week will be intense and emotional, and we need that comfort level with the other team members so we will feel free to talk about the experience and process it.

Tomorrow, we get to deliver sweaters and book bags to the children at a Buckner-supported slum ministry.

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