

Perryton couple follows God's call to small African nation

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Stan and Angie Burleson have made many moves throughout their marriage. But their relocation to Lesotho—a small nation in southern Africa—has been one of the most challenging yet rewarding in their life together.

The Burlesons are missionary church planters supported by First Baptist Church in Perryton. They work in Lesotho's Matsoku Valley and surrounding areas with a home base in Katse.

Long and winding road

Their journey to the mission field was long and winding, with challenges along the way. Yet both attest that God's hand prepared the way.



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their marriage. But their relocation to Lesotho—a small nation in southern Africa—has been one of the most challenging yet rewarding in their life together. (Courtesy Photo)

Stan and Angie met in sixth grade in Perryton and dated in high school there before both arriving at Wayland Baptist University as an engaged couple.

They married after their freshman year at Wayland and lived in married housing while completing their degrees—hers in education and his in music. As students, she worked in the campus daycare center, and he worked in the university store.

After graduating in 1992, Angie taught in Plainview. Stan continued working at the campus bookstore a year after he graduated and then went to work for Family Christian Stores. As he worked his way up the corporate ladder, the couple moved to Michigan. Then everything changed.

“God told us to go back to Texas, right back to where Stan started,” Angie said, recalling their move back to Lubbock. “I think that was a huge part of the plan that God had for us to get us on the mission field.”

Stan served as a part-time music minister at a church while working with Family Christian Stores. In time, he left the retail business to become an elementary music teacher and then entered full-time music ministry in Ozona. While there, Angie was invited to attend a mission trip to Belarus with a longtime friend.

“It changed me and changed my whole outlook on life. I came back and

said, ‘Stan, you really need to go with me next year,’” she recalled.

‘We knew God was calling us to missions’

“Stan went back with me that next year, just before we moved to Seminole, where he would serve as the music minister. He came back changed from that mission trip also, and we knew God was calling us to missions.”

When visiting missionaries shared at Seminole, Angie bombarded them with questions, prompting the visitors to sense the Burlesons’ call to missions. But the path wasn’t really clear yet. Soon, Stan felt called to return home to First Baptist Church in Perryton as music and missions pastor.

“God obviously knew what he was doing. In his sovereignty, he put Lesotho in front of our church and us within a few months of us getting to Perryton,” Stan recalled.

“We had Mission Aviation Fellowship missionaries come to share with us, and they invited anyone who wanted to come visit them. Two high school girls really felt led to go there. So, the next summer in 2009, the church took its first mission trip there.”

On that trip, Stan met Jim and Teresa Flora, Southern Baptist missionaries in Lesotho. Over the next eight years, the church sent more than 20 teams to the African nation, with Stan attending two to four trips each year. The church agreed to adopt a valley to focus their work, selecting the Matsoku Valley on a vision trip.

“I was nervous, casting this vision that God put upon my heart. I stood in this valley and just looked at the huge mountains and villages, some you could see and some you couldn’t see, and wondered how this little church

in the corner of the Texas Panhandle could do this,” Stan recalled. “But like everything, it wasn’t about us doing it. God would do it. We just had to be obedient.”

Making the move to Lesotho

After years of trips to Lesotho, the Burlesons finally decided it was time to make the move. Their two daughters were out of high school, and the church agreed to be their sending partner. They raised additional support quickly and arrived in Africa in early December 2016, just in time to help complete the last six months of a national feeding program that supported 750 families during a historic drought.

While earlier mission trips to Lesotho enabled the Burlesons to become accustomed to the country and meet people there, full-time missionary life was an adjustment.

“I did not grow up around agriculture at all. So, it’s crazy to see how God has taken us to a place where we literally are watching for goats and sheep and cattle and oxcarts and shepherds, just like in biblical times. And there is dirt everywhere,” Stan said.

“We have never been huge outdoor people, but now we climb up and down mountains and down trails and streams, and we ride horses.”

The Burlesons love the Basotho people and spread the gospel in creative ways through building relationships. But their work is not without challenges. While the Basotho are open to the gospel generally, they are heavily entrenched in ancestral worship and African traditions such as the sangoma, or witch doctors.

Many people in the Matsoku Valley are subsistence farmers, growing primarily corn and raising sheep for wool and mohair for the clothing

industry. The HIV epidemic left many children in the care of single parents or grandparents. School is provided through grade seven for free, but additional schooling costs more than many families can afford.

‘Mobile moms’ ministry

Angie runs a “mobile mom” program in which Christian women check in on orphans at least once a week to ensure they are healthy, well-fed, clothed and have adequate shelter. They report special needs to Angie for possible solutions.

They focus on new clothing at Christmas, as well as providing blankets and sleeping mats for the orphans, and about 250 are served throughout their ministry area.

The moms also meet monthly for Bible study, an educational lesson, health lesson, and to learn a new Bible story they can teach the children.

“We are trying to work ourselves out of a job essentially. We’re trying to train disciple-makers, using the four-fields process of planting, developing, harvesting and reproducing,” Stan said.

“We’re trying to set them up for a lifetime of Bible study. We have Bibles available for them, and they want to learn.

“Our biggest message to other believers is that being obedient and available is the most important thing in our walk with Christ. When God calls, we must surrender ourselves and say, ‘Yes.’”