

NELSON NEWS

Mozambique Missions | *David and Melinda* | melinda@flourish-thrive.org

Looking back

Seventeen years ago while serving in Mozambique, God pointed out to me a 1 year old infant and said, "Take care of this one." Thus began my journey with Nando.

Loneliness and the feeling of being unwanted is truly the most terrible poverty.
Mother Teresa

Nando's mom didn't know how to love him. Maybe it was the years of abuse that she took at the hands of men who saw her body and not her soul. Or perhaps it was something else.

All I know is that far too many times I found Nando alone and abandoned, sobbing in the sand. And far too many times, after midnight, I was carrying a scared, tired, hurting kid to his home, only to find no one there.

Children are wired to love their parents regardless of their goodness or badness. It's often a mystery to those of us who work with kids from broken homes how they still pine for an abusive parent.

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All I want for Christmas...is *a bowl and spoon.*

Sometimes the perspective one gets living in Mozambique is jarring. After all, I just can't fathom an 18 year old American teen hoping & praying they might get an eating utensil for Christmas.

Nor can I imagine it normal for anyone reading this to expect the answer to "Did you have a good day today?" to be, "Yes, I was in the river to wash my clothes." Not only do most of us not have to wash our clothes in a river, but I suspect if we did, we wouldn't be identifying it as a reason for it to be classified as a *good day!*

I am assaulted by the injustices of poverty on a daily basis here, but I will be truthful and admit that the greater danger is that it no longer assaults me. It is one reason I pray every day, "Lord, let not my heart grow numb." So you will understand then why I was grateful when I found my heart hurting when one of my recently aged-out orphan friends texted, "I need a little bit of your favor if possible. I have been for 3 days without eating nothing because we r in lack of food." These type of texts and calls are not as infrequent as I wish they were. Regrettably, Mozambique still remains one of the lowest Human Development Index

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And there was no mistaking it or finding an unoffensive way to state it: Nando's mom was mean.

So when God pointed out this child to me and told me he was going to need extra help, I knew it was true. And as soon as he was old enough to understand, Nando and I entered into an agreement. If he ever forgot he was precious and valuable and loved, he was to come to me to be reminded.

And so it began that I would often hear Nando approaching, as his loud wailing was a trumpet call announcing his arrival. And I would swoop him up, hold him in my arms, look him in his



eyes and speak over him the truth: "Mama Melinda loves Nando. Jesus loves Nando." Some days it would take five minutes before his hurting heart could calm down enough to hear what I was saying, other days he immediately relaxed in the presence of love.

countries in the world, with a GDP per capita at no more than \$640 U.S. in 2013. **Fortunately**, every 'aged-out' orphan I know wants to work and earn their own living. ('Aged-out' meaning they are no longer children and not legally allowed to remain living at an orphanage.)

Unfortunately, the unemployment rate is sky high, and these friends of ours, with no or minimal family support available, often end up homeless or struggling to stay alive.

So, what to do??

**I hope you will go out
and let stories happen to you, and that
you will work them, water them with your
blood and tears and your laughter till they
bloom, till you yourself burst into bloom."**

Clarissa Pinkola Estés

Well, let me tell you one of those stories...

Earlier this year, our adopted in love (not legally) 18 year old son Nando called to let us know he was living on the streets. At the time, we were in a living situation where we were not allowed to bring him to our little rental place, so I was left feeling hopeless. My heart was racked in pain and I seriously don't think I can convey adequately the anguished ache that pierced my whole being.

Of course, I did everything I could to remedy the crisis, but the sad reality is that Mozambique has few resources to help young people such as Nando. So though I called my pastors, talked to the local street kid ministry (no overnight options), pleaded with orphanage directors, cried at my weekly Bible Study, everywhere I turned, I came up empty-handed. I felt weak and inadequate until the Lord reminded me that the very reason David and I had returned to Mozambique was exactly because we saw a gap in care for 'aged-out' orphans like Nando. What was happening to Nando was confirmation that we were exactly where we needed to be! For more information on how we are working to help Nando and others like him, visit:

<http://flourish-thrive.org/prayer-requests>

(16 years after my initial agreement to always remind Nando "Mama Melinda loves Nando. Jesus loves Nando," he states emphatically, "I know Mama Melinda. **I never forgot!**")

And lest we forget His reminder, Galatians 2:10 still speaks

It's that most wonderful time of the year...

Yes indeed, now is the time everyone wants to be your friend! Proof: look at your Inbox, as well as your physical mailbox. This is likely what you'll find:

- *Last Chance for a Year-End Gift.*
- *Time is running out!*
- *CTC needs \$1.1M before midnight tomorrow to meet our 2015 goals.*
- *We still need your help.*
- *All giving that is postmarked on or before Dec 31 will be credited for the 2015 tax-giving year.*
- *Before 2015 ends, don't forget to send your gift—it will be doubled. And it will make a significant kingdom impact.*

The variations of this theme are endless, but they all have the same underlying intention: "Give to me or my cause!!"

I find the onslaught of these messages curious, as I imagine few who make end-of-the-year donations need promptings to remember to do so. No, I think many of these messages are rooted in one thing, and one thing alone. Simply put: FEAR.

Organizations and ministries fear that if they don't get your dollars, someone else may, and that may be to their detriment, so they ramp up their marketing manipulation. Their approach may be subtle or even aggressive, and I don't doubt they are well



Nando sharing his testimony at a church Alpha meeting.

-intentioned. In fact, many of their causes are just and good.

But I know my heart (and David's), and it's our desire that this ministry be fueled by those who give because they WANT to, and do so from a foundation of freedom and joy, rather than compulsion.

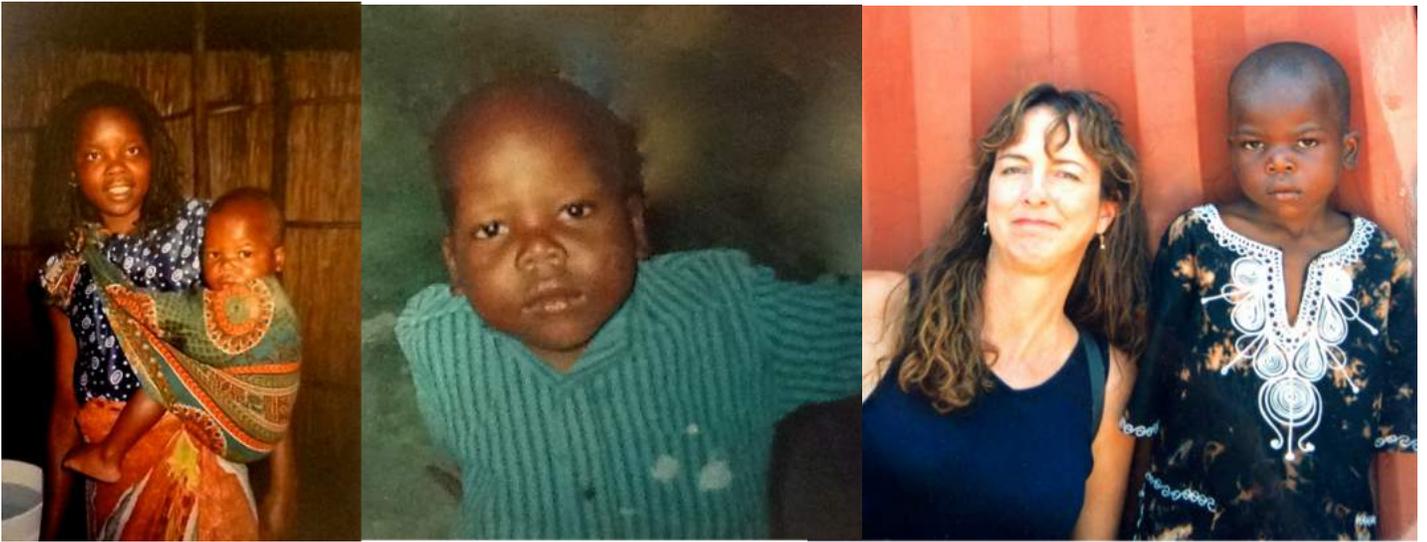
It is for this reason I often stay away from the end of the year mission marketing fray. And truth be told, we don't have the time or the money to compete with the 'big dogs.' We are definitely 'underdogs' in size and budget, but I'd rather focus on what we believe God has called us to do than being drawn away into a sales arena I am neither gifted or equipped to enter.

So my friends, we can't promise to double your money, nor will we be sending you a calendar, but we hope that *"Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, but because God loves a cheerful giver...and you will abound in every good work."*

Generating foundations that support human flourishing in desperate places

Flourish & **THRIVE**

www.flourish-thrive.org



For those interested in making a tax deductible donation, you have a few options.

- 1) Cheques can be written out to: R U Red E? Ministries and mailed to: R U Red E? Ministries, PO Box 49, Pigeon, MI 48755. **Please** include a note that it is for Melinda/David Nelson's ministry.
- 2) Online, you can give a gift at: <http://flourish-thrive.org>
(You will be led to a Paypal page where you can donate through your bank account (*no charge*), using a credit card (*2.5% charge*), or from your Paypal balance (*no charge*).

If tax deductions are not necessary for you, we will receive your support faster, and you can get it to us through one of these options:

- 1) You can give directly to our Paypal account online using either of these email addresses: melinda@maxnet.co.nz or tigger.nelson@gmail.com or melinda@flourish-thrive.org
As noted above, your donation can be through a credit card, bank account, or Paypal balance, and can be set up as a one-time gift, or a reoccurring monthly gift.)
- 2) If you prefer the old stand-by snail mail method, you can write a cheque to Melinda Nelson and send it to my faithful friend and helper who handles our mail while we are out of the country: Sue Layman, PO Box 21986, Bakersfield, CA 93390. (Phone: 661-900-6330)

If you have any unanswered questions you think we could help you with, please don't hesitate to email or Skype (dmnelson777). We can also be reached at 231-352-0708 which is a US-based Skype number that travels with us internationally. Just be aware of the time difference and extend grace knowing our reality of sporadic electricity and internet.

2015 was my happy year becose i find u and i cry. I proclaim, i pray, and i chose a best way. i hope in 2016 i will do even more then this. i love u. thanks 4 caring about me. Marry christmas.

Nando