

INSERT COVERING THE CHIDIDI WEDDING

About six months ago the pastors from our Bible School came with a request that we marry them in a church ceremony. This has been one of the ways the Lord has been working in them to change their culture. It was all their idea – none of us suggested it to them. Before we knew it there were 22 of them from the ages of about 26 to 76 years old. They were all married under the tribal/cultural setting, but none had been married in church.

I returned to the States and thought it would be wonderful to made dresses for the women and I managed to find bolts of cloth for \$1 per yard and it was 60" wide! I was passing the men's department and saw gold shirts in similar colors so matched them up. I told a friend in Virginia and she sent a check to cover the material.

I took the material and thread along with boxes of "bling" to Malawi on my last trip and my friend there worked on a simple pattern and she agreed to decorate the front of all the dresses – what a talent – everyone was different! I found earrings here to match and purchased silk flowers along with shoes I found on sale to match the dresses. My granddaughter and her friend worked on making necklaces to match and friends in Houston also supplied some necklaces. Finally, I purchased panties for each of the women. Over the six months I waited for sales of 85% off and armed with an additional 30% coupon I purchased pants for each of the grooms. I even got each bride and each groom silver wedding rings.



Two days ahead of the wedding we gave them all their apparel to try on and made sure that the shirts the men were wearing matched the brides' dresses.

The night before the wedding, I struggled to get to sleep and finally fell asleep around midnight. An hour later there were banging doors and loud voices passing by my tent. Africans never speak quietly – I once heard that if they whisper then people around them think they are speaking about them, so they talk loudly so everyone can hear and believe me, everyone did hear them that night. They collected pails and went off in the moonlight to get water, so they would have bath water in the morning and there would be enough for their husbands as well. They all slept in one room and after they returned to it there was much laughter that went on until the sun came up. I later learned that they had tried on their panties at 3.00 in the morning and were dancing around the room in them. I do not think I have ever seen brides more excited about their wedding! I began to doze again around 3.00 and was awakened at 3.30 with the cooks arriving to light the fires and warm the water for bathing.



Some of the work on the dresses



The weddings took place at 9.00 after we all had tea and cookies. The church was decorated with flowers picked from the bush as were the tables. We had borrowed tables and I had managed to find table clothes to match the dresses. One hit – at the beginning of the week there was nothing to sit on! Just down the road from the church there was a government place where they trained men and women to sew and do woodwork so Tuesday before the Friday wedding I went down and requested they make 50 six seater benches by Friday morning. The church needed them anyway. They cost us \$3 each!!!! They were delivered at 8.00 on Friday morning!

They took their vows in three ranks – one rank at a time and we had proper marriage certificates which were signed and witnessed and placed in certificate holders. Some of the wives were heard to say if their husbands gave them problems in the future they would bring out the certificates and remind them.



Signing the marriage certificate.

The wedding luncheon

The wedding vows:

“Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.” (Ephesians 5:21-33)

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.” (Colossians 3:18-19)

“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.” (I Peter 3:1-7)

Exchange Vows (Wives first - then Husbands)

*"I stand with you today - before God and these witnesses - to renew the vows - of a Holy Covenant
Forgive me if I have disappointed you.*

I want this day - to be a new beginning – for you and me – starting fresh.

I will love you and cover you – shield and protect you.

I will comfort you - and encourage you.

I will support you - and strengthen you.

I will honor you - and listen to you.

I only want God's best for you.

When times are tough – I will draw you to me – commit my courage – offer my resources - until the danger subsides

You can depend on me – to be here – when the dust settles

I will pray for you - and edify you - all the days of my life.

Jesus gave you to me - and I thank God for you – you are my precious gift."

Couples repeat to each other at the same time:

"Though we are so different, yet we are 'ONE'"

One in Spirit – One in Purpose – One Flesh

When we walk in agreement – nothing can stop us!

"If God be for us - who can be against us?"

Ring of Covenant (Wives then Husbands)

"With this ring, I wed thee one day.

And pledged that I always would be here for you

Even now it remains a reminder to all

That our love is secure and our union is true."

YOU MAY KISS YOUR BRIDE!





It was a glorious day for all. There was plenty of food to go around for the bridal party and their guests and many of our elderly came by to see what was happening and we laid tarps on the ground and invited them to join us for the meal.

There is no doubt that this will be the talk of the whole area for many months to come. Nothing like this has ever been done before and it is a real testimony that the teachings of the Bible School are changing lives and culture.

Things are growing. Because we have wives attend the school every second session all of the churches now have operational children's churches – the future of Malawi! Because of the Bible School we have well over 200 youth now who are no longer rebellious and seeking out drugs, girls and alcohol but are excited about the Lord and excited to attend the youth meetings. We now have ladies' meetings and are encouraging each church to start its own – not for the purposes of getting together to slander and gossip but to have Bible Studies and prayer meetings.

Most excitingly we are having our teaching subjects translated into Chichewa and we will put them into manual form so that when the pastors graduate in October next year they will be able to take the teaching back to their church and start their own small Bible Schools.

Who says it is not exciting to be a Christian and to work for the glorious Kingdom? It is time for everyone to realize his or her potential in Christ and to pursue their destinies for Him!!!