

## DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

### 31,000 Congolese People Die Every Month From The Conflict Here In The DRC.

After a rather disturbing morning recently here in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I sat on my couch in prayer. Brother Grosbach and I had been in our classrooms at the Training Center when suddenly we heard the sounds of soldiers running by. Within an hour's time students were demonstrating in the streets. We waited for a while longer and carefully drove home.

As I sat there on the couch, I began to reminisce about last year's journey to Kolwezi. When we arrived, we were lodged in a Methodist Guest House. The Methodist missionaries had permanently left two years before our arrival, but the house was still maintained by the local African church. I looked around in the bedroom and noticed that, among all the items, there sat a woman's perfumes. Looking further throughout the house, I saw children's toys, books, and a closet still filled with clothes. At the time I didn't think much about it.

Today, sitting in my living room, it suddenly dawned on me. I had not realized why all those things were still there. At the time, I had thought it strange for those things to be left there for so long. Then it came to me, all the personal items of the missionary family had remained because of the war. The war in Congo has been going on for over six years now. Nearly four million people have died. Most of the people have died from starvation or disease. The north and east have suffered greatly. Thousands of women and young girls have been raped and many have been killed. The cries of families have been heard as husbands were dismembered while their wives were forced to stand by and watch. In some horrific cases, they were forced to eat a part of the flesh of their own families. All of this was done to infuse even greater fear among the population.

So often, in the comfort of our American homes, we lose sight of the atrocities of war. 9-11 brought a "real world" shock to many passive Americans, a shock that rattled them to their very core. There came the realization that life is fragile and can be taken in a moment. On that fateful day, families became more important than ever. Safety and security became precious commodities. Prayers were whispered from lips that had not spoken God's name in a long time.

I thought of how the Methodist missionary wife had once enjoyed the fragrance of that perfume. In my mind's eye, I saw her watching her children read their few treasured books in their missionary home. But as war began to ravish the land and the impending doom came closer to Kolwezi, there was also a 9-11 kind of shock in that home. The perfumes, the furniture, the children's toys and the books meant nothing. They were no longer items of value. The most precious and valuable things were their own children and their own lives. They had the freedom to leave. The Congolese did not.

As an American, I can leave this war-torn land, but the thousands of brothers and sisters here in the United Pentecostal Church must remain behind. This is their land, their only place of residence. You see, their 9-11 has gone on for six years and continues to press at the doors of their homes each day. Many of you have children in Iraq today, and the Congo church prays for them.

In June 2005, the plan is to have free and fair democratic elections. We ask that you pray for peace in this great nation of over 51 million people. After 18 years of working to register the church in this country, it was accomplished in August three years ago. We have had some revival in the last three years of our stay here. There are now four thousand souls in the church. We are due to furlough in 2005, and then we plan to return to this nation. The potential for revival here is nearly unlimited. War has tried to stop the revival but has failed. Peace would make the task so much easier, but Spiritual Victory will be won regardless of the natural circumstances. We ask you to remember this country in your prayers today, tomorrow, and in June of 2005. Democracy stands at their doorstep. This is a natural freedom that can only aid in even greater Spiritual Revival.

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IN The last six years 3.8 million Congolese have died as a result of the conflict in the northern and eastern REGIONS OF THE COUNTRY.